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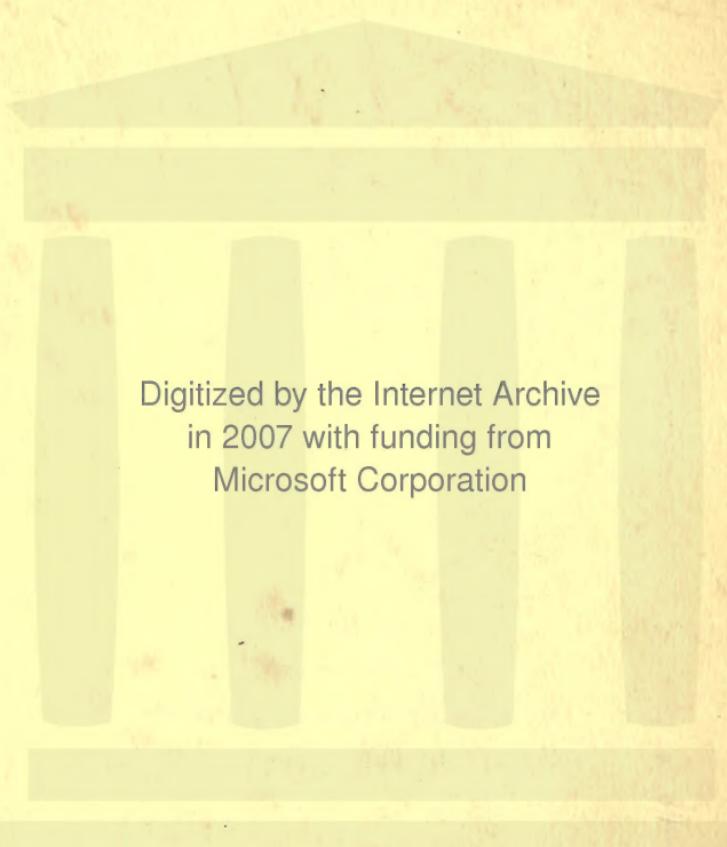
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The "Notre Dame" Series of Lives of the Saints

ST LOUIS
KING OF FRANCE

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ST. LOUIS IN PRAYER

(FROM A BAS-RELIEF OF 13th CENTURY
IN NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL PARIS)

SAINT LOUIS

KING OF FRANCE

1215-1270



LONDON: SANDS & CO.

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SAINT LOUIS

KING OF FRANCE

CHAPTER I

BLANCHE OF CASTILE

IT was the 25th of April—probably in 1215, but the exact year is uncertain—the festival of St. Mark in the joyous Easter season. The French peasantry had donned their holiday attire, for there was surcease of tillage in the land on that day, and sports and revelry in prospect for the afternoon. But in the early morning hours the bells boomed solemnly from village steeple and castle keep, summoning the faithful to join in the processions, with black-draped crosses in front, which wound slowly through the several parishes, while the chant of the Greater Litanies filled the air with bewailings and petitions for graces and temporal prosperity, but more especially for a mitigation of the misery of Christians in the Holy Land.

Only in the royal manor of Poissy was there silence in the belfries, for up at the castle a little life had just begun in one of the low rooms with narrow windows and rounded arches, “ and

monks and canons were unwishful to disturb the repose of the babe and his lady mother.” But soon a gracious mandate issued from the darkened room :

“ Peal your gayest carillons ! The birth of my son is matter indeed for glad and loud thanksgiving.”

And the better to remove all restraint from the merrymaking of these honest folk in their time-honoured noisy fashion, the Princess Blanche had herself and the new-born infant conveyed in a horse-litter to a lonely farmhouse some miles away, which is still pointed out to tourists as “ the Lady’s Barn ” and “ La Grange Saint-Louis.”

Meanwhile couriers spurred eastward to Paris with tidings of the birth of this second grandson to King Philip at the Louvre; and the heir of France, Prince Louis the Lion, was hastily summoned from the Holy War against the Albigensian heretics in the South, to assist at his son’s christening in the Collegiate Church of Poissy. The font which did duty on this occasion is still to be seen with its rhyming inscription :

“ Saint Louis fut enfant de Poissy
Et baptisé en la présente église.
Les fonts en sont gardés encore ici
Et honorés comme relique exquise.”

In after years, the holy King whose life we are writing loved to sign himself in private letters “*Loys de Poissy.*”

“It was at Poissy,” he explained to his friends, “that I received the greatest honour of my life; for the grace of Baptism is the most precious of all God’s gifts, and the title of Christian the very highest of dignities.”

From the earliest dawn of reason, he learnt at his mother’s knee that he must live as befits a Child of God and Heir to the Kingdom of Heaven.

“Fair Son,” she often told him, “I love you—God knows how dearly! Yet I would rather see you dead at my feet than know you to be sullied with one single mortal sin.”

This truly Christian mother had the privilege of training two of her children to be honoured by the faithful in the calendar of the Church. So great was her share in the moulding of St. Louis’s character that a few words about herself will not come amiss as an introduction to the story of his life.

The parents of Blanche were Eleanor Plantagenet and Alphonsus VIII of Castile; and she had grown up amid the crusading traditions of the gallant little kingdom, whose very name recalls the strongholds crowning its sierras as ramparts of Christendom against the Moors.

We catch our first glimpse of the tall fair-haired girl of twelve, with eyes “*grene as glas*” like those of Chaucer’s heroines, as she steps forth with her sister Urraca, to welcome to the court of Toledo their aged grandmother, Eleanor Duchess of Guienne, sometime “*Queen of England by the Wrath of God.*”

But it was a chastened and gracious Eleanor who quitted the penitential seclusion of the convent of Fontevraud where she was expiating the crimes of her proud career, and crossed the Pyrenees to see with her own eyes if the young princesses were—as fame bespoke them to be—“elegantly shaped in form and feature, and so richly dowered by God in virtues and in talent that all the world must bow before them.”

It was neither doting affection nor idle curiosity which prompted Queen Eleanor—then eighty years of age—to undertake this long and toilsome journey, but a sincere desire to avert war by a judiciously-timed matrimonial alliance. For though the Barons and Bishops had chosen King John as “*the ablest Atheling*” to fill the throne left vacant by the death of Richard the Lion-Heart, yet the King of France was already arming to support the claim to the English crown of his vassal, young Arthur of Brittany. From Toledo she despatched a friendly letter to the Louvre, putting it very plainly to King

Philip Augustus that her son John could be reckoned on to provide a handsome dowry in Norman fiefs, should either of his nieces be the chosen bride of the heir of France. In reply there arrived from Paris no less a personage than the High Constable, Matthew de Montmorency, with full powers to negotiate a treaty of marriage; and Eleanor, with her womanly tact, was on the spot to suggest that the name Blanche would make sweeter melody than Urraca in a Frenchman's ears.

The widow of Henry II knew that her own name was unpopular in France outside the limits of her Duchy of Guienne; so, when the preliminaries were adjusted, she escorted her granddaughter only as far as Bordeaux and there resigned her to the care of the good Bishop Elias.

"I have done with wedding feasts and scenes of revelry," she told Blanche. "I am more in my place at a funeral, and soon I must prepare for my own."

The territories immediately subject to Philip Augustus were at that time—A.D. 1200—under an interdict. So, much to the regret of the Parisians, the nuptials had to take place within the dominions of John—at the "Saucy Castle," in fact, built by Richard the Lion-Heart as a standing defiance to his royal neighbour of France. But the state entry into Paris was very

splendid. The newly built palace of the Louvre had its walls hung with tapestry woven expressly for the occasion. Everywhere along the route there was a wealth of garlands, where the lilies of France intertwined with the myrtle of Castile, and the roses of love peeped between the laurels which were meant to betoken the warlike propensities of the twelve-year-old bridegroom.

The icing of the bride-cake is said to be symbolic of the sweets of the honeymoon, while the layers of fruit and spices underneath represent the more substantial joys of Christian wedlock. The royal pair had both kinds of happiness in good measure. "Never queen so loved her lord" say the chronicles of Blanche. She was one of those valiant women, elected by God to work for the souls of others, who seem to find a pleasure in submitting wholeheartedly to lawful authority, even when that authority is vested in human beings with abilities inferior to their own.

"On her husband she bestowed that wealth of admiring tenderness which such women can give only once in their lives. She was a pattern mother, but she was an ideal wife. After his death the less womanly virtues of independence and vigour were fostered, of necessity perhaps, to the cost of others. . . . Into her spiritual life she threw all the fervour and strength of endur-

ance which made her such a redoubtable lady to her barons. Of the fierce battles for humility she may have fought before the throne of God the only visible result was a more austere and vigilant autocracy. . . . There are moments in her career when one is vividly reminded of the tough old termagant Eleanor of Aquitaine. . . . Certainly when her severe holiness is combined with the practical genius of the Capetian House, every one would predict remarkable children."—(*Court of a Saint*, by *Winifred Knox*.)

Perhaps it is due to the steady influence of her vigorous virtue that the verdict of contemporaries is unanimous in favour of the husband of Blanche: "A lion to the wicked and a lamb to the good." "Not easily roused to anger, but hard to appease, he cared nothing about eating and drinking, nor the pleasures of a soft and easy life. His wife was good enough for him, and rarely were they seen apart."

As soon as Louis was knighted he took his full share in the wars between France and her feudatories. In 1205 just after the birth of his eldest child, he disgraced himself—but it is the sole blot on his honour—by the pillage of the wealthy town of Courtrai in Flanders. Blanche uttered no word of reproach; but she caused a small military tent to be fitted up for her personal use, and henceforth she accompanied her

lord in the greater part of his campaigns. She was with him in Anjou during the summer of 1213, when her uncle John fell into their hands and, thanks to her judicious counsel, was allowed to return home unmolested and without paying a ransom. And yet he muttered : "I have no luck."

The sun that witnessed John's discomfiture in Anjou saw likewise the overthrow at Bouvines of his more formidable allies, the Emperor Otho and the confederate barons of France. This famous victory was the crown and reward of the lifelong exertions of Philip Augustus, a man well capable of appreciating the great qualities of his daughter-in-law. Her discreet common-sense and her resolute energy and sympathy with his own ideas would, he argued, go far to counter-balance the martial impetuosity and lack of political caution in her husband. For the old king's mind misgave him that Louis the Lion would think more of extending his dominions than of consolidating his dominion, and that his passion for war would give the barons an opportunity to encroach upon the royal authority and render themselves, as of yore, practically independent of the Crown.

Things were going well with Philip when he hastened from Paris, at Blanche's summons, to attend the christening of his second grandson.

Trade was prosperous among his friends the burghers. The realm was being divided into bailliwicks in each of which a crown-official was appointed to keep the local magnates in check. One of his most formidable vassals, Ferrand of Flanders, was a captive at Paris since the day of Bouvines. Another, John of England, had been declared a "felon traitor" by the Peerage of France,—thereby forfeiting all his French possessions north of the Gironde,—and events were moving rapidly overseas to justify further his nickname "Lackland." For John's excesses had alienated every class among his subjects, and the Bishops and Barons knew they had the nation at their back when, two months after the baptism at Poissy, they wrung from him the Great Charter of English Liberty, "shaping law and loyalty each man to know his own." Henceforth John regarded all his subjects as his enemies, and the army of foreigners he let loose among them were well content with their pay, consisting as it did in an unlimited licence to plunder and pillage.

This king has been severely censured in history for making England over to the Holy See as the easiest way of getting out of a predicament. But Englishmen of his day had cause to be thankful that their island was in very truth "the fief of St. Peter." For, since all his raids

were on Church property, the Papal Legate had no choice but to issue against him a decree of excommunication, and the Barons were justified in their appeal to the people :

“Are you willing to have a king accurst by men and thrust out from her pale by the Church?”

According to Saxon law and Norman precedent, the nearest in blood was not necessarily chosen to fill the vacant throne. It was part of the Witan’s duties to elect as monarch “the ablest Atheling”—in other words that member of the royal family most likely to be gifted with “the ruling arm”; and the hereditary principle had been likewise deliberately ignored since the Conquest at the accession of every monarch, with the solitary exception of Richard I.

Blanche of Castile was decidedly “the ablest Atheling” in 1215. In the following January an embassy arrived from England to offer her husband the crown, and King Philip, who was then at Poissy, advised him to refuse.

“We have land enough at home,” he urged, “and trouble enough as it is, to oust the English from France without going to deal with them in their own country.”

But “Messire Loys” was otherwise minded. Possibly both he and his wife regarded the English realm as a very suitable “apanage,” or

younger son's inheritance, for his infant namesake.

"Sire," he protested, "an it not displease you I will undertake this business."

"By the lance of St. James, fair son, do as it listeth thee," replied the cautious Philip. "But I fear me thou wilt never achieve thy intent. The English are traitors and felons, and will not keep their word."

"Sire," said Messire Loys, "I commit the adventure to God. I am only your vassal for the fiefs which I hold in this kingdom, and you have naught to do with what toucheth England."

The envoys were well pleased with this speech, and readily agreed to deliver hostages into Blanche's keeping in token of good faith. Then the Prince embarked for his kingdom, with three hundred knights and six hundred boatfuls of men at arms.

Events turned out just as Philip had foreseen. Within the year John died, and the barons rallied round his little son, Henry, who was hurriedly crowned—some say with his mother's bracelet—and began his reign under the guardianship of the Papal Legate. Prince Louis, indignant at the breach of contract, wrote home for "steel and gold," to push his claim by force of arms. But Blanche's jewels were already in pawn, and the wary old king was not to be inveigled into a

quarrel which was likely to embroil him with the Court of Rome.

“Sire,” pleaded the princess, casting herself at his feet, “will you leave your son to perish in a foreign land? Bethink you that he is your heir! Send him what he needs, or at least the revenues of his own estates.”

“Indeed, Blanche, I will not,” replied the king.

“No, Sire?” quoth the lady.

“Truly, no!”

The princess rose to her feet, in mien a lioness.

“Then, pardie, well know I what I shall do. I have two fair sons of my lord, and by the Blessed Mother of God, these will I put in pawn! There be many willing to lend me upon them.”

“Blanche,” quoth the king, “take what you will from my treasury, to use as you think befitting. Only, mark me, of myself I send nothing.”

“Sire,” answered Blanche, “you say well.”

Verily the old chronicler Matthew of Paris, our authority for this dialogue, was at little pains to put flowery language upon the lips of his speakers.

CHAPTER II

LE ROI EST MORT ! VIVE LE ROI !

WE know not whether Philip Augustus took Blanche's words in their literal sense and insisted on retaining the custody of his grandsons. Certain it is that he was very fond of both these promising boys, and wept like a child at the death of his namesake Philip, the elder of the two, and a clever intelligent boy "whose wit and learning astonished clerks and prud'hommes." Little Louis spent much of his time at the Louvre, and the old Crusader told him stories which caused his eyes to sparkle and set his cheeks aflame, while every nerve quivered with enthusiasm at the bare mention of the word "Jerusalem." What then were his emotions when in 1223 there arrived at Paris the titular King of the Holy City, John de Brienne, who was then on a begging tour through Western Europe to solicit men and money for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre. This veteran warrior had still more thrilling tales to tell, of his late

luckless expedition to Egypt where he had been so loath to leave the remnant of his army, some in chains for Christ, and some scorned by the Saracens as apostates, while the bones of others were whitening on the ramparts of Cairo—or as he called it “Babylon in Egypt.” Little could the narrator guess that the fair-haired lad, who listened with such rapt attention, was destined—a quarter of a century later—to march his troops along the self-same route and secure for those wretched ones release, Christian burial, and facilities for conversion.

The French monarch was eager to do the honours of his capital to his distinguished visitor. Together they rode over the cobbled pavements of its streets with gabled houses and spacious gardens on either hand. Together they inspected the stout wall, pierced with many gates, which surrounded the city, and the stately pile of buildings,* lately erected, to serve as palace, prison or fortress, in case of need. Together they crossed the Seine, to that populous and turbulent island where students from all parts of Europe came to study in the famous schools which had recently received the Papal Briefs and the Royal Charters welding them into a University. Everywhere the two kings met smiling and contented faces, everywhere they were greeted with hearty

* The Louvre.

enthusiasm, everywhere they saw the signs of brisk trade and prosperous security.

King Philip, at that time, stood at the top of opinion in France and had fully justified in the eyes of Europe his surname of *Augustus*. Forty-four years had elapsed since the day—just after his accession—when his courtiers watched him nibbling young twigs in a brown study.

“I am thinking,” he told them, “whether God will grant to me, or to some one of my heirs, the grace to raise this realm of France once more to the height it reached under Charlemagne.”

This speech gives the keynote to his policy. When he uttered it, his writ was law only in his own hereditary dominions—the Isle of France of which Paris formed the centre. Two-thirds of the kingdom owed taxes and military service to the English Plantagenets, and the remainder was parcelled out among other dukes and counts who were practically independent of the Royal authority. True, on receiving investiture of their fiefs, all these Great Feudatories swore fealty to their sovereign—kneeling bareheaded, with sword ungirt and both hands locked in his. “Cracking the strong warrant of an oath” was a heinous offence in those Ages of Faith; but homage was a personal matter, and if the Duke or Count broke the bonds of his allegiance his immediate vassals were still obliged to take the

field with him, against the armies even of the King.

It is not our purpose to follow Philip through the series of brilliant achievements and magnificent ceremonial which won for him his surname. Rather would we consider him as the shrewd, vigilant business man who, by patient attention to the details of administration, strengthened the hands of his successors in the struggle for supremacy between the Crown and the Baronage. As a rule he chose officials and deputies from the ranks of the lesser landholders—thus winning the direct homage of men of worth and ability, and lowering in the eyes of his subjects the prestige of the overmighty Brotherhood of the Twelve Peers of France. With a like prudent forethought he aided much the great movement by which the towns of Western Europe wrested or bought from their lords emancipation from serfdom and villeinage, and acquired the right of self-government. The towns and villages thus enfranchised were called *communes* and they looked to Philip as their natural protector. There are numerous instances on record of his intervention on their behalf, and in return they helped on his schemes with money and militia. As many as sixteen boroughs sent their trainbands to fight under his orders at Bouvines, where their presence and doughty prowess added humiliation to the defeat of the nobles.

Ten years had passed since that famous victory, and its lesson had had time to sink in. And now—in this summer of 1223—the King felt strong enough to convene the Court of Peers at Paris, to advise with them on such a modification of the oath of fealty as prevailed in England, where every vassal who helped his lord to rebel against the Crown “fought with a halter round his neck” and was liable, if captured, to suffer the extreme penalties of treason.

But early in July it was bruited abroad that the King was too ill to meet his lieges. Very quickly—as the evil tidings spread—the churches in Paris were thronged with kneeling multitudes of every rank and every age, while the pitiful cry went up to Heaven :

“Lord—O Lord ! Save our King ! Hear us when we cry for him to Thee.”

And God doubtless heard the simple prayer in the way that His Wisdom saw was best; for the mighty monarch closed his prosperous reign by a truly Christian death on July 14, 1223.

As most of the Great Feudatories were already in Paris, it was a very stately procession that escorted his bier from the Louvre to the Abbey of St. Denis. The King of Jerusalem walked with Philip Hurepel, Count of Boulogne, younger son of the deceased; but, for the crowds who lined the route, a far more interesting figure

was the child clad in violet who walked nearest the coffin, clinging to his father's hand, while the summer sun made glory in his golden curls. Burgesses and 'prentices, maids and matrons, clerks and men-at-arms murmured blessings on him as they watched him pass, and they whispered one to another :

“ In that boy is the hope of France.”

For the new King, sad-faced and wan, looked ghastly in his mourning robes of purple, and his tenure of life seemed very frail. His short reign was mainly filled with wars against the English; for the guardians of Henry III worked hard to regain the provinces which John had forfeited, and Louis was determined to cede to them “ not one inch of ground,—no, nor the value of one small cheese.” His victories over the hated foreigner kept him very popular in the eyes of his subjects; but they rendered him far too dependent on the goodwill of his Barons who saw in this warlike policy a chance to retrieve their feudal prestige. So, as soon as order was restored in the west, the Peers of France, assembled in session, decided that it would be good and useful to the realm if the King in person were to take the field against the Albigenses, whose latest atrocity had been to flay alive and cut in pieces his near kinsman the Prince of Orange. Louis, nothing loath, marched south

at the head of his Barons, but before leaving Paris he drew up his will in which the most interesting bequest was “ all my jewels to found a church for the honour and reverence of my Lady the Virgin Mary.”

The campaign was at first a series of triumphs. But after taking the rich town of Avignon and securing their share of its spoils, the Regent of Brittany and the Counts of Champagne and of La Marche agreed together to leave the King in the lurch after the forty days’ minimum of military service to which he was feudally entitled. Theobald of Champagne was the first to withdraw his troops, and his defection warned Louis what he had to expect from the others. There was no question of ending the war in one campaign : he must return at once to Paris to prevent them from wreaking mischief in his own hereditary domains. Sudden illness—either poison or camp fever—forced him to halt for a few days’ rest at the friendly castle of Montpensier in Dauphiné, and thence he despatched a courier to the Queen announcing the exact date when she might expect him at the Louvre.

There was joy in the Royal household at the prospect of his speedy return, and pleasant were the plans for the next few months in his beloved company. At last the longed for day arrived—a bright morning in early November—and it was

arranged that the whole family should ride forth from Paris to meet the King.

The younger children were in litters with their attendants, or in one of those uncomfortable springless coaches in use during the thirteenth century; but Blanche was mounted on a magnificently caparisoned palfrey, and with her rode her eldest boy, eager to embrace his father and to let him see how well he had learnt to manage his prancing pony. The Queen and the courtiers were much amused by his impatience, and at last he was allowed to gallop on ahead with his tutor and one or two knights. Alas! it was not the King whom they saw riding towards them, but the Chancellor of the Realm, Guérin, the soldier-bishop of Senlis, who alighted from his horse as soon as he recognised the Prince, and putting knee to earth when he reached his stirrup saluted him by the title of King.

A few days previously, Louis the Lion had made a Christian death, retaining his consciousness to the last. Shortly before he expired, he made a touching appeal to the knights and counsellors assembled in mournful silence around his couch :

“ Good friends, swear to obey the Prince of the kingdom, and to have him crowned as speedily as may be, after I have passed from life to death. And if—which God forbid—my Louis

should chance to die, swear to be in like manner loyal to his brother John."

Every hand was promptly raised in assent. And then the dying King expressed very clearly his desire that the guardianship of his children and the regency of the realm should be entrusted to "my Lady Blanche."

All this, with many edifying details of her husband's death, the Chancellor now imparted to the afflicted Queen. Valiant woman as she was, she fainted at the shock of the news and only came to herself to cry out :

"Oh! that I were dead too!"

But she had little leisure to indulge her grief. The funeral from the south was not far distant from the gates of Paris, and the dying commands of her husband brooked no delay in execution. On the 15th of November the obsequies of Louis VIII took place at St. Denis; and already the great cathedral was being put in readiness for the coronation ceremony to take place there a fortnight later.

In the interim the boy-King received his knighthood at the hands of his uncle Philip, Count of Boulogne. This was no mere ceremony in the Middle Ages, but a solemn engagement to lead a life of abnegation and "armoured charity." The ideals of a knight are well summarised in the lines which Tennyson puts into

the mouth of King Arthur concerning "the fair Order of his Table Round":

"A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man
But teach high thought and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man."

Of this nature was the oath which our Louis was now called upon to take; and as he watched his armour through the night-vigil that preceded his dubbing, he had leisure to reflect that the sword forms part of the coronation regalia quite as much as the sceptre and the Hand of Justice, and that a King has sometimes to exchange the ermined mantle for a coat of mail. Full earnestly the lad of eleven prayed and resolved that, when-

ever his sword flashed, it should be to the good a harbinger of hope, and an omen of terror to the enemies of God and France. At daybreak Mass was celebrated to draw down Heaven's blessing on his new career. Then the golden spur was bound upon his heel, in token of zealous ardour in the performance of his knightly duties. Next his uncle struck him lightly with the flat of his blade and handed to him a naked brand.

"Receive this sword," he told him, "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and use it in defence of yourself and of Holy Church, for the confusion of the foes of God, and for the honour of the Christian Faith, and as far as human frailty will allow, let it wound no man unjustly."

Perhaps it was his mother's hand which girt him with his sword-belt, and flung upon the shoulders of the newly-created knight the golden, rose-enamelled chain of the Order of St Michael with its pendant five-pointed star bearing the significant inscription :

"Monstrant Regibus Astra Viam."

Louis's chivalrous and kingly dispositions were Blanche's great solace in these first anxious weeks of her bereavement. Her brother-in-law stood by her loyally for the nonce, and she could always depend upon her ministers; but the nobles were by no means inclined to submit to the rule

of "the Spanish woman," and they whispered to one another that now was the time to win back all the feudal powers and privileges which they had been forced to relinquish during the preceding reigns. The soul of the league against her was Isabella of Angoulême, the widow of King John of England, who had married Hugh de Lusignan, Count of La Marche. Her husband and Count Peter of Brittany answered the Regent's summons to the coronation in these haughty terms :

"Rheims shall not see us in her cathedral until thou hast redressed our wrongs."

Ferrand, Count of Flanders, had a more valid excuse for non-attendance. He was a prisoner on parole at Paris since the Battle of Bouvines, and why should he do homage for a fief which it was not permitted him to visit? Theobald, the volatile Count of Champagne, sent knights and servants to prepare for him in the Royal city a lodging suitable to his rank and luxurious tastes. But his dastardly withdrawal during the recent campaign rankled fiercely in the Regent's memory, and the Provost of Rheims roundly told his varlets that, if the Count of Champagne dared lift his banner within the town, it would be torn in shreds and hurled with contumely over the ramparts into the ditch beyond.

The Duchess of Brittany, however, (Prince Arthur's half-sister and Count Peter's wife), sent word that she would take part in the proceedings, although in flagrant disobedience to her husband's mandate; and Theobald and Ferrand sent their Countesses in their stead. The presence of these last two ladies bade fair to prove embarrassing, for each pressed her claim to carry *Joyeuse*, the famous "Sword of Peter" with which Pope Leo III had erst-while gifted Charlemagne. To avoid being dragged into the dispute, the Regent decided that this ponderous weapon was far too cumbersome for a lady to wield; and she entrusted it—for this occasion only—to her brother-in-law the Count of Boulogne.

Louis was knighted at Soissons on November 28, and that evening he made his state entry into Rheims; for on the morrow—the first Sunday in Advent—he was to be crowned and anointed King. The child was wearied out after his vigil of arms and the exciting emotions of the morning; so he slept soundly on his bed of state at Rheims while the officers of the royal household stood around with naked swords. Before dawn there came loud knocking at the chamber door, and these sentinels cried aloud without stirring from their post :

" Whom seek ye ? "

In solemn tones came the reply: "We seek him whom God has chosen to reign over us."

The challenge was repeated and answered three times, before the door was finally unbarred to admit twelve canons from the cathedral Chapter. Louis had already donned the tunic specially devised for the coronation, with its seven openings to facilitate the anointings; and now, while the clergy knelt around reciting appropriate prayers, his attendants robed him in cloth of silver and placed upon his brows a cap of black velvet with diamond carcanet and floating plume. Then two Bishops led him to the Cathedral, in the sanctuary of which there had been erected for him a scarlet-draped throne, under a velvet canopy of royal blue embroidered with fleurs-de-lys and fringed with gold.

All down the long nave floated banners and pennons of the lesser nobles who filled the great building with their retainers. But few were the occupants of the special seats reserved around the throne for the twelve great Peers of France, whose duty it was to crown the king after the Bishops had anointed him from the sacred ampulla said to have been brought from heaven by a dove in the days of Clovis.

The See of Rheims was vacant at the time; so it was Walter Bishop of Sens who performed the unctions, administered the oath, and invested

with the various insignia of royalty. Louis's demeanour throughout the ceremony was an artless blend of stately chivalry and childlike frankness. His reverent boyish tones thrilled through the Cathedral as, his hand upon the gospels, he swore in presence of the Eucharistic God to govern his people with fatherly justice, to protect the weak, to redress wrongs, and to uphold against heretics the purity and authority of the Catholic Faith. A tense silence prevailed while he spoke; but the thought was uppermost in the minds of all: "The destinies of France are in the hands of a woman and a child."

"And only three women and a boy to uphold the Crown!" was the added comment, when a few moments later the Duchess of Brittany stepped forward with the Countesses of Champagne and Flanders and Hugh Duke of Burgundy, a strippling of fourteen, to lift the diadem of Clovis from the altar and support it over the head of his youthful successor.

But when the slender fingers were withdrawn and the newly-crowned monarch faced his subjects, wielding *Joyeuse* with ease and grace, there was a sudden revulsion of feeling, and a loud enthusiastic cheer rang hot from every heart:

"Noël! Noël! God send our King a long life and a good one!"

CHAPTER III

TROUBLES OF THE REGENCY

THE coronation removed one of Blanche's grave anxieties. But still the great feudatories stood aloof from their allegiance. They would not obey the Castilian Queen and her Italian Minister —for the latest grievance was that the Regent admitted to her councils the Cardinal Sant'Angelo, Papal Legate to the court of France. It is said that they went so far as to offer the crown to Enguerrand de Coucy, a vicious old man whose lands did not even rank as a barony, but who was a near kinsman of Philip Augustus and allied in blood or by marriage with most of the noble houses of France. It was even whispered that a goldsmith in Paris had supplied the crown which they placed upon his head behind the impregnable ramparts of his stronghold at Coucy. But such a proceeding was quite out of keeping with Enguerrand's disdainful device :

“ Ne suis roy, ni comte aussy
Suis sire de Coucy.”



Le premier duconement le Roi Roi
et comment il s'en vint d'Aquitaine en
France apres la mort son pere

desormais pme que nous
sommes acquitez de
l'etrange en France la
bie et les fai du bon Roi
sore le gros qui tenu
de Dame Roussin en son

Embarkation of St Louis

"Comment il s'en vint d'Aquitaine en France, apres la mort de son pere"

(Reproduced, with the permission of the Governors, from a fifteenth century manuscript
of the *Chroniques de Saint Denys* in the John Rylands Library, Manchester)



And, before he had time to prove the rumour to be true or false, his horse shied while fording a river, and falling heavily forward, he died, impaled to the hilt on his sword.

Blanche's queenly tact succeeded without bloodshed in winning homage from her other adversaries, or in rendering them harmless at least for the time. Ferrand of Flanders she freed at once from his thirteen years' captivity, and she found in him ever afterwards a loyal and useful friend. A personal appeal to the chivalry of the Count of Champagne enlisted his services likewise on her side. This alliance was of great importance, for the position of his domains enabled him at any moment to cut off the food supplies of Paris and hinder communication between the metropolis and the south and east. Gold from the royal treasury was discreetly offered in other quarters. Three thousand marks, for instance, went to secure the neutrality of the English King; and a somewhat higher sum was the value set on his oath of fealty by Peter Mauclerk, the clever but unscrupulous nobleman who administered Brittany during the minority, of his son Duke John.

But Peter, when the money was secured and spent, went back on his word and entered into conspiracy with Hugh de Lusignan, Count of La Marche, to carry off the young King—not with

intent to hurt, but merely to keep him apart from his mother. The boy was to be seized when out hawking with his courtiers, but somehow the plot reached the ears of Theobald of Champagne, and he warned the Regent in time. She took refuge with her son in his castle of Montlhéry, one of the strongest fortresses in France, with secret passages underground facilitating escape in case of need. The burgesses of Paris, hearing of her plight, armed immediately and hurried to the rescue. From every hamlet and farmhouse on the road, a steady stream of stalwart peasants rushed out to swell the throng, till scythes and pitchforks bade fair to outnumber the pikes and halberts of the city trainbands.

And so the young King was fetched back to Paris. In after years he loved to recall that memorable ride from Montlhéry along an avenue of stately poplars, lined with loyal Frenchmen who, as he passed, shouted :

“ God send a good life and a long one to our lord the King, and guard him always from his enemies.”

He told his courtiers too, how when safe back in the Louvre, his mother took him in her arms and wept for joy as she clasped him closely to her heart and exclaimed between her sobs :

“ Child, child, bethink you always how won-

drously God has delivered you from the hands of your foes, and never forget the love and loyalty of this good people who armed so readily in your defence."

The action of the Parisians on this occasion may serve as a specimen of the perfervid loyalty which animated the middle classes in the Communes. This was one precious legacy—indeed we might call it a family heirloom—which Louis inherited from his grandfather. Another was the group of capable advisers which Philip had selected from among the ablest men in the kingdom. Around the council board there were shrewd level-headed ecclesiastics such as Guérin of Senlis and Walter of Sens, as well as grim, grizzled warrior-statesmen like Matthew de Montmorency and John de Brienne. Then too there was the stalwart and devoted phalanx drawn from the ranks of the lesser Baronage who had rallied round the oriflamme on the day of Bouvines. These were the friends whom the young King and his mother could safely trust, and who in their turn could always rely on the "Ruling Arm of the Spaniard" which, together with the strain of the Plantagenet in her nature, made Blanche's regency an undoubted success. They knew how passionately she had loved her husband, and were in a position to appreciate her marvellous self-control, after the first fierce

outburst on hearing of his death, so that grief did not incapacitate her for work and none of her duties remained undone. She knew exactly what she wanted, was always just—though severe and liberal—in her punishments and rewards, and there was no shiftiness in her statecraft. St. Louis's delicate conscience was sometimes troubled in after years lest his inherited possessions had not been honestly acquired; but he never found matter for restitution in the methods of his mother's administration.

Her first and greatest difficulty came from the west where the English held the fiefs from the Pyrenees to the Garonne, and where north of that river, Isabella of Angoulême kept the nobles, greater and lesser, in a ferment of bewildered treachery. This lady certainly worked her utmost to make the minority of Louis as great a failure as that of her own son King Henry. She was always goading her husband and sons to make trouble for Blanche; and Peter Mauclerk was usually entangled in the plots and rebellions which lasted until Louis came of age.

In the autumn of 1228 news was brought to the Louvre that the Count de La Marche was in open revolt, and that his stepson, Henry III of England, had armed in his behalf and was actually at Nantes hand and glove with Count

Peter of Brittany. The Regent promptly decided on immediate action and that the King in person should take the field. By her advice Louis wrote this pithy challenge to Mauclerk :

“ Come with me, or against me.”

And, as no notice was taken of the summons, the campaign opened by the siege of the Breton fortress of Bellesme. It was winter, and the tents of the besiegers collapsed beneath the weight of the heavy snow. But Blanche was in the camp; and she saw to it that the food was wholesome and plentiful, and that great fires were kept up night and day. She paid, it is said, for fuel and provisions, but the orchards in the neighbourhood had all to be cut down. The soldiers were not called upon to face any hardships which their King was not willing to share; and a great wave of loyalty surged passionately in every heart for the brave, eager-hearted lad of thirteen ever foremost in the onslaught, ever pitiful and compassionate for the wounded and weary. The defence was strenuous and prolonged, but at last the royal banner floated above the donjon tower. Even in the first flush of victory Louis wept over the scenes of carnage it had cost, and registered a vow that never would he unsheathe his sword save in defence of his subjects, for Faith and Fatherland.

The capture of Bellesme made Peter Mauclerk enter into himself. He could not help contrasting the firm promptitude of the Regent and the brilliant bravery of her son, with the indolent hesitancy of his English ally. "It is no weather for fighting," said Henry III. So he frittered the time away in feast and tournament at Nantes; and, despite his fair promises, never an English soldier crossed the channel to take part in the war. The Breton Count saw it was wisest to be friends with France, and in proof of good faith he delivered over his daughter Yolande to be educated by Blanche as a bride for one of her younger sons.

The peace was of brief duration—it lasted just long enough for Yolande to fall sick and have to return to her native air—but it afforded Blanche an interval of leisure of which she profited to bring to a satisfactory conclusion the war against the Albigenses in the south.

"Try to win him by benefits," Louis urged on his captains, as he despatched them against Raymond of Toulouse. But kindness was wasted on the haughty Count, and French blood flowed in torrents before he was compelled to go to Paris and sue for pardon in the porch of Notre Dame, barefooted and clothed in a single garment. The terms were not easy. Thirty-four of his castles were dismantled; he had more-

over to give large alms to the Cistercian Order, to found ten professorships at the University of Toulouse, and to fight for five years overseas against the Saracens. His estates at his death were to pass to his daughter Jeanne who was to marry the King's brother, Alphonse of Poitou, and Blanche on her part promised to bring up the heiress as a child of her own.

Raymond until his submission, and the great western Lords throughout the King's minority, could at least be classified by Blanche among her avowed and consistent opponents. But it was otherwise with the volatile poet-count of Champagne, who proved equally troublesome as adversary or ally. The brilliant emotional Theobald was quite out of place as a feudal lord. He had a gift for mixing in the quarrels of his neighbours, and they on their part were always glad of a pretext for a foray in his fertile province. Sometimes, when there were too many attacking him at once, the Regent would relieve the pressure for forty days by summoning the raiders to her wars in the west. More than once she found it necessary to send armies into Champagne against the Barons "leagued to lay waste the province and reduce it to charcoal." Nay, the young King himself had to take the field on his behalf and notify the aristocratic marauders :

" Ye shall in no wise fight with any vassal of

mine without finding me armed in his defence." Theobald was just the enthusiast to hitch his chariot to a star above his grasp; and he professed himself smitten by the fair, stern beauty of the contemptuously-pitying Blanche. In one of his songs he tells us how he yearns to be a nightingale to sing out his life in her praise. "My heart, my body and all my land are at your feet," he cries in a penitent outburst, after she had told him a few truths in very plain language. And his thoughts were drowned in self-pity, we read, as he bemoaned his hard fate, so far removed above him was "this sweet-faced lady, all good and all pure in her life."

Willingly would Blanche have kept him always at a distance; and perhaps it would have been sound policy to snub him more frequently than she did. For on such occasions he consoled himself by dabbling in plots against her authority, and usually returned to his allegiance in time to "frustrate the knavish tricks" of that "hatcher of sedition" Peter Mauclerk. During one of these lapses from loyalty we find Blanche sending word :

"Sir Count of Champagne, the King has just learnt that you have arranged to take the Count of Brittany's daughter in marriage. The King commands you to think no more of it, unless you wish to lose all you have in the realm of France;

for you know that the Count has done him more harm than any man in France."

Theobald hurriedly broke off the match and married Margaret of Bourbon. But in the following year—1234—he inherited Navarre, the little kingdom astride the Pyrenees, with a magnificent hoard of money and jewels; and to celebrate the occasion he betrothed his eldest daughter to Peter's eldest son, without asking the King's consent. This was a gross breach of feudal etiquette which under the circumstances could not go unpunished. The Peers of France, convoked in feudal Parliament, declared the fiefs of Brittany forfeit to the Crown. The King in person took the field against Champagne. The contumacious rebels found themselves without allies; for the King of England was powerless to help—perhaps unwilling—and the Barons of France, mustered in force around the oriflamme, the red and gold banner of St. Denis, which was only unfurled when the King himself conducted a campaign. Before a single blow had been struck, however, each of the haughty Lords came to sue for pardon in the royal camp at Vincennes.

The first to arrive was Peter Mauclerk "unkempt and dejected, sick with fear and white with shame" as he quailed beneath the scornful glances of his former admirers. He knelt before

the King in humble guise and did not venture even to plead for a mitigation of the sentence pronounced against him.

The young King, stern in countenance and word, proved himself merciful in act towards the fallen traitor. He deprived him, indeed, of the fiefs which Blanche had granted in the hope of attracting him to the royal cause by ties of interest and gratitude combined. Peter, moreover, was constrained to give pledges that he would fight five years in Palestine as soon as his son was of age to govern his dukedom. Blanche insisted particularly on this condition, for Peter had forsworn himself so frequently that an honourable banishment was the easiest expedient she could think of, to secure the peace of the realm against his turbulent shiftings of allegiance. But the Count seemed now thoroughly ashamed of his former treasons; and events proved him sincere when he took the oath of fealty "to maintain the rights of my Lord Loys, the illustrious King of the French, in the face of and against any creature whatsoever that can be born or die."

The court had hardly time to recover from its surprise at this sudden conversion, when the Count of Champagne arrived, not quite so humble in his demeanour, but the bearer of letters from the Pope requesting Louis to suspend hostilities

against the King of Navarre, lest the Holy Land should suffer on account of dissensions between Christian Princes. But Louis saw no reason why these new-made honours were to cloak the ingratitude of repeated treachery; and once again the listening Barons stood amazed, while one of their mightiest received, in silence and abashed, a very scathing rebuke from the lips of his suzerain. The regal attitude which Theobald chose to assume, gave point to the sentence, contemptuous in its mildness, that he should pass six years away from France “in Palestine or in Navarre.”

But worse was yet to follow. Theobald contrived a more or less dignified exit from the royal presence only to find himself at the mercy of an excited, jeering mob, who docked his horse’s tail and paraded him with contumely through the streets of Vincennes. Nay, there appeared at an upper window the boyish face of Count Robert of Artois—the brother of the King and the darling of the court and army—and historians differ as to whether it was a dish of tripe or of soft cream cheese with which he bespattered the luckless Majesty of Navarre.

Louis could not allow such an outrage to pass unpunished, however much his delicate sense of duty might conflict with his feelings as a brother. He publicly apologised to Theobald for the insult

and promised that condign chastisement should be meted out to the ringleaders. But the Count professed himself willing to condone the offence, and craved a free forgiveness for the giddy young Prince and all the others concerned in the riot. This act of magnanimity restored his self-respect, and he and Louis parted good friends.

The King of France had just completed his twenty-first year and this was his first act as responsible ruler — a blend of clemency and firmness that augured well for the future. It speaks much for Blanche's wisdom that, when he assumed the reins of government, all his adversaries—except the Lusignans—had been turned into friends. Even the solitary instance of imprudence that could be substantiated against her had been frankly acknowledged and repaired.

For, if the Regent dealt thus mildly with her enemies, it was only to be expected that she would miss no occasion of showing to those friends who had always stood by her, a grateful appreciation of their services. Her partiality for the good citizens of Paris plunged her at one time into a sea of troubles and even drew down upon her a severe rebuke from Rome. It happened in this wise. The University of Paris was one of the most famous seats of learning during the thirteenth century. At the time of which we treat, the students in residence num-

bered between thirty and forty thousand, and some of the professors were obliged to deliver their lectures in the public squares. The University had of course its charter of privileges,—exemption from the jurisdiction of the civil authorities being one of the most valued. Town and Gown rows followed, as a matter of course; and, during a carnival riot in 1229, much property was destroyed, and sundry law-abiding citizens were maltreated. The students certainly had gone too far; and when complaint was carried to the Regent, she authorised the magistrates to arrest and punish the offenders.

The whole University,—professors as well as students—resisted stoutly this infringement of their rights; and as no heed was paid to their statement of grievances, the lectures were discontinued and over twenty thousand collegiates quitted Paris in a body, to the great inconvenience of the local tradesmen. Appeal was made to Rome; and Pope Gregory IX addressed to the young King and his mother a brief, couched in terms of sharpest censure.

“ The kingdom of France,” wrote His Holiness, “ hath been long distinguished for power, wisdom and benignity. But power is due to the valour of the nobles, wisdom to the knowledge of the clerks, benignity to the clemency of the Prince. And this power becomes insolent, this

benignity imbecile, where knowledge lacks. It imports to your honour and to your wellbeing that affairs at Paris be established on their former footing."

As the Pope's letter was addressed to Louis, jointly with his mother, the young King was of necessity informed of its contents. The grief which it caused to Blanche, and her whole-hearted promptitude to atone for her error, served to deepen in his soul the sentiments of Catholic loyalty and filial submission to the Holy See which she had ever been at pains to inculcate. And the stern and merited rebuke in no wise lessened her son's admiring reverence for her many great qualities, and the conscientious statesmanship which had characterised the whole period of her regency. Often, when she spoke with him of the many anxieties and perils which beset the path of kings, he told her earnestly :

" My Mother, I shall always seek your advice. You shall ever and everywhere be the best and most trusted of my councillors."

CHAPTER IV

THE CHILD IS FATHER TO THE MAN

THE Queen Mother was always most particular in the selection of those to whom she entrusted her children. When Louis was seven years old he was put under the care of the Constable de Montmorency, a finished type of Christian chivalry and "better and wiser than any in France."

Blanche reserved to herself the sacred duty of instilling into the boy's tender heart the first notions of virtue and of piety, until on his fourteenth birthday a Franciscan Friar—Blessed Mansueto of Castiglione Aretino—was appointed his confessor and instructor in Christian doctrine. The King approached the Sacrament of Penance every Friday, and sometimes oftener if his delicate conscience accused him of any fault. He early adopted the practice of asking his director to give him the discipline, and did not fail to remonstrate if the blows fell too lightly. Later in life he had to deal with a priest who required no urging, but Louis never winced or complained. Only after the death of this severe

ecclesiastic, he pointed to his poor lacerated shoulders and smilingly bade his new confessor take notice that the one in office before him had done his business with a heavy hand.

Frequent communion was exceptional in the Middle Ages. Even St. Catherine of Siena had much difficulty to secure the great privilege which to her was a matter of life and death. St. Louis could not obtain permission to approach the Holy Table more than a dozen times in the year. His fervour on these occasions was so intense that its expression verged on singularity. He used to drag himself on his knees to the altar rails, recite the Confiteor aloud with groans and tears, and receive the Sacred Host with transports of love and joy.

He usually assisted at several masses every morning and was most assiduous in hearing and reading about holy things. There is a story told by Robert of Sorbon which, though it refers to a later period of his life, may be inserted here to show that he read and listened to some purpose. Sermons in the thirteenth century required courage and coolness on the part of the preacher, as well as fluent erudition. For, in that age of intellectual activity, it was not uncommon for members of the audience to interrupt, with any correction or improvement which their superior knowledge or their conceit might sug-

gest. Once a learned clerk, who was preaching before the court, alluded to the quenching of the candles during the Office of Tenebrae as symbolical of the extinction of the light of Faith in the hearts of the Apostles on the first Good Friday. A prelate who was present stood up and contradicted him flatly.

“The Apostles,” said he, “abandoned Christ in body, but never in heart.” The preacher in his flurry was about to retract, when St. Louis arose in his turn.

“The proposition is not false,” he exclaimed. “It is to be found clearly stated in the writings of the early Fathers. Bring me the Commentaries of St. Augustine on the Gospel of St. John.”

The King’s secular studies were directed by men who had practical experience of worldly affairs and a generous contempt of worldly vanities. First there was Guérin—Brother Guérin of the Knights of St. John, Bishop of Senlis, Chancellor of the realm, “a man of honour and very loyal.” He saw to it that the young King was drilled carefully with his brothers and pages in the tilt-yard, and exercised in all that pertains to the special duties of a knight. Blanche could never bring herself to allow her sons to take part in a tournament, for her husband had been severely wounded in

one such friendly passage of arms. But she put no obstacle in the way, when there was question of facing danger in a real campaign for the kingdom's weal; and Louis could have had no more chivalrous "godfather" than Guérin when she took him with her to receive his "baptism of fire" under the walls of Bellesme.

But the knightly Bishop was waxing old; and when he retired to end his days in a commandery of his Order, his place in the royal household was filled by an Italian of gentle birth—Brother Pacificus—who had exchanged the casque and baldric for the cowl and girdle of the Friars Minor. This holy religious, as learned as he was virtuous—was well fitted to superintend the studies of the young King. He instilled into him his own love of poetry and music, and we read that Louis sought out eagerly those members of his household who were gifted with good voice and correct ear, and spent happy hours in their company, singing roundelayns in praise of virtue and hymns to the Mother of God.

Another of his favourite pastimes was the game of chess. He found in it, say the chroniclers, a peaceful image of warfare; and it gave him scope for a leisured study of the principles underlying the tactics of this most tumultuous of sciences.

He was fond, too, of riding out with hound and

hawk—so fond indeed that he had to be on his guard later on, lest this pleasure should degenerate into passion.

"My time is not my own," he used often to repeat. "I fear to waste in hunting many of the precious hours which belong of right to my people."

His tutors however encouraged a moderate indulgence in this manly and healthful diversion, and the nobles were taught by the royal example not to ride across the fields under cultivation, or otherwise to injure the standing crops.

The account books of the household have been preserved. "They show sums disbursed, not only in charity and good works, but on such matters as furnished the ornament and amusement of life in those times—minstrels and musicians; lions and porcupines and other animals of a menagerie; falcons and falconers; dogs and huntsmen and horses. Money was spent on feasts also, and on gold and silver plate; on robes of purple and scarlet and on silks and furs. But it may be observed that, in later years at any rate, the King's personal needs seem to have been supplied at less cost than those of his younger brothers."—(*Heroes of the Nations—St. Louis*, p. 64.)

Louis's tastes were very simple. He had but

one use for money—to give it away; and often repeated in after life: "Thrift is a great help to alms-giving." The following anecdote shows us that his tutors had to curb his lavishness in deeds of mercy.

Early one morning, we read, he saw from his window a crowd of beggars in the courtyard of the palace. Dressing quickly and quietly he hurried down to them, followed by a page who carried a large bag full of coin. Louis spent a happy ten minutes among his beloved poor. But perhaps their blessings and thanks were too loud or too shrill-voiced, for soon a tonsured head appeared at another casement. His tutor had risen early to do business with Blanche and now called down:

"Sire, I am watching your misdeeds!"

"Good Brother," answered the King, "I am but paying my retainers. These good folk fight for me by their prayers, which ward off dangers and ensure peace within my dominions."

In one way or another the daily round of duties and amusements had a connection with religion or future responsibilities. A very small portion of the day was devoted to the knowledge that can be gleaned from books. It was more important that the King should mix with men, and come into contact with the people he was called upon to govern. He travelled a great deal with

his tutors in different parts of France; and every-where all classes of his subjects found him easy of access and ready to be interested in their concerns.

Sometimes these journeys took the form of a pilgrimage to a famous shrine, and one of the first was of course to St. Michael's Mount in Normandy. No king of France omitted a visit to this granite rock on the edge of the Atlantic, with its high tower and colossal statue of the great Archangel which served as beacon to the mariners for miles out at sea. This lonely stronghold had once served as a sanctuary for the gloomy Druid rites; much human blood had flowed there, and many horrid superstitions were rife till the first Christian missionaries consecrated it to the Leader of the Heavenly Host. An old prophecy was current that great calamities would befall any King of the Lilies who failed to perform his devotions in this hallowed spot.

When there was no royal manor in the neighbour-hood the King and his suite usually lodged in some abbey or priory on the road; and the cordial hospitality he received but deepened his reverence for everything connected with the cloister. He loved to follow the daily routine of the monks, even to stand in their ranks after night prayers and receive in his turn holy water and a blessing from the hand of the Superior.

At Royaumont he had his own cell always prepared for him and his stall like the others in the choir, and the frugal fare served at table in the refectory was good enough for him.

In this establishment, where it was customary for each religious to fetch his portion of food from the kitchen, we find Louis sadly embarrassed as to the safest mode of transport for his own hot pittance, till he hit upon the plan of carrying the steaming bowl inside his hat. He took his turn too, and enjoyed it, at the manual labour in hand, harvest work or church building as the case might be.

“The monks do not speak at their work, neither must we,” he had sometimes occasion to remind his attendants; and he exhorted his brothers to help him with hod and trowel that so they might gain the indulgence.

It was an age of splendour and pageantry, when men were careless about creature comforts. Yet the luggage of the royal party must have been fairly considerable, for even household furniture had to accompany them on their journeys. Early one morning Princess Isabella, sound asleep, was picked up among the bedding which was flung, unfolded and unshaken, on the heavy springless waggons being loaded in the courtyard.

The mention of this little sister reminds us

that Louis had not the disadvantage of being an only child. Five out of Blanche's twelve children lived to grow up; and there was no lack of variety in the royal family, for each of its members offers a type distinct.

Isabella, the only girl, was a baby of two when her father died. Her life has been written by Agnes d'Harcourt, her maid of honour and sister in religion, who speaks of her as: "a true mirror of innocence, a fragrant rose of patience and self-denial, a shining lily of holy purity and a copious fountain of mercy to the poor and infirm." She had been carefully educated, and knew enough Latin to be able to correct the compositions of her chaplains in that language. Especially was she expert with her needle. "She wove silk and gold into vestments for the priests, and adorned altars and tabernacles with veils of her exquisite embroidery." Nor did she disdain to work on coarser material for the benefit of her beloved poor. Once, St. Louis asked her to give him the woollen cap she was spinning.

"No, brother," was her gentle answer. "This is the first of the kind I have ever made, so it belongs by right to Christ in the person of His poor. But gladly will I make you another like it."

The King took the side of his sister when it was question of betrothing her to Conrad, son

and heir to the Emperor Frederick II. Blanche was in favour of this alliance, and the Pope was hopeful it would bring peace to distracted Italy. But Isabella had made a vow of chastity when she was thirteen years of age, and she wrote to His Holiness that she considered a virgin consecrated to God to be far superior in dignity to all the queens and empresses in the world. She longed to serve God in the habit of Saint Clare, but years were yet to elapse before the death of her mother set her free to follow the Divine call.

Out of her patrimony she built and endowed the celebrated convent of "Our Lady's Humility" at Longchamp not far from Paris, and here she lived with her nuns under the rule of St. Clare. But, having regard for her delicate health, Pope Urban empowered St. Bonaventure to introduce that mitigation in the austerities which distinguish the Urbanists from the Coletines.

Isabella spent nine happy years in her convent and died there the same year as St. Louis, while Angels, for the comfort of her weeping sisters, sang: "Her Home has been established in peace."

Until the Revolution it was the custom of the French court to go every year to Longchamp for the liturgical functions of Holy Week. There is nothing now on the spot to recall the

memory of St. Isabella, but still the gay world of Paris sends forth every Easter its crowds to the race-course which occupies the site of her pious foundation; and those interested in millinery look forward to “Longchamp week” as the most favourable opportunity for studying the spring fashions!

Isabella was not the youngest of the family. Charles was born six months after his father’s death, and we have a suspicion he was very much indulged and petted in his childhood; for there is a strain of selfishness always discernible amid the really brilliant exploits of his after career. His harshness and extortionate taxation rendered him extremely unpopular among the three nationalities he was called upon to govern,—for Louis invested him with the province of Anjou, Beatrice his wife brought him the county of Provence, and in 1264 he accepted the Pope’s offer of the crown of Sicily, and succeeded in wresting it from the son and grandson of Frederick II. The island was under martial law, administered with extreme severity, till the exasperated natives rose in revolt and massacred every Frenchman in the great towns, at the celebrated “Sicilian Vespers” of 1282.

But there was a certain justice in Charles’s despotism which seemed in the eyes of his contemporaries less intolerable than the weak

caprices of unstable demagogues. Dante did not deem it incongruous to recognise in Purgatory his "manly nose."

Louis's attitude towards Charles is always that of an indulgent elder brother who has at times to nerve himself to rebuke and correct. We see him waiting well pleased at the church door till Anjou had finished his protracted devotions. We hear him "stammering with rage" as he throws the offending dice into the sea, and we note with satisfaction that the over-burdened vassals of the Count could, and did, have recourse to the royal tribunals, confident of meeting there with unbiassed justice.

But on the other hand it was Charles's interested policy which dictated the trend of the unfortunate expedition to Tunis; and the genuine tears which rolled down his cheeks as he stood bareheaded by his brother's bier cannot have been untinged with remorse.

Of a very different stamp was Alphonse, the second youngest of the royal brothers, a gentle studious youth but unemotional, prevented by his delicate health and weak eyesight from regarding outdoor sports and martial exercise otherwise than as a fatiguing task.

Both Louis and Blanche set a high value on his conscientious ability in the management of affairs; for he had a shrewd head for business

and an infinite capacity for taking pains. His father's will left him the turbulent county of Poitou for *apanage* (or younger son's inheritance) and his marriage with Jeanne, heiress of Toulouse, gave him in addition the war-worn provinces of the south. Both these sets of fiefs had to be conquered, pacified, and nursed back to prosperity; and Alphonse, even when quite a young man, proved himself equal to his task. He ruled with a firm hand, repressing lawlessness and taxing lightly. Then came the Crusade, and he sailed a twelvemonth after the others, so useful was his presence in France to leave all things in order during the protracted absence of the King. But Louis would not begin proceedings until he had listened to his advice as to the plan of campaign. And, when Blanche had sent her piteous appeal to be relieved from the cares of her second regency, the King could remain yet another three years in Palestine, secure in the confidence that Alphonse was at her side, lightening her burden by sharing its responsibilities, and working with her in perfect harmony as the ablest and most loyal of unpaid officials.

Turn we now to Robert of Artois, the nearest in age to Louis and the most dearly beloved of his brothers. We have already caught a glimpse of him at Vincennes, drenching the King of

Navarre with tripe (or cream cheese); and his animal spirits remained unquenched till he rode his death ride in the mad headlong charge at Mansourah, a taunt for the Templars on his lips and a mocking gibe for the Earl of Salisbury.

Louis knew his brother's limitations too well to allow him to accept the crown proffered by the German electors. But the soldiers loved the jovial, frank-hearted, irresponsible youth, and performed prodigies of valour under his command. "From his cradle," say the *Chronicles*, "he scorned all slothful delights, and joyed in honour and largess and knightly deeds all the days of his life." Like all Blanche's children, Robert was solidly pious. Before leaving France for the Crusade he knelt at the shrine of St. Denis, craving to be found worthy of the grace of martyrdom.

"I know that my brother is in Paradise," was Louis's comforting assurance amid the violent outburst of grief on learning his untimely death.

And Louis himself, what of him? Let us pause a while to contemplate him on the threshold of manhood—a tall, slender, well-knit stripling of nineteen, fair-haired and with "blue dove's eyes full of grace and attractive charm." Those dove's eyes habitually smiled in kindly recognition of the fair glad world around him. Often

too they were brimful of honest mirth and laughter, for like most saints—especially saints of the Franciscan school of piety—he had a keen appreciation of the ridiculous, and could enjoy a joke even at his own expense. But they could blaze too with sudden flashes of anger; for a hasty, hot temper furnished him throughout life with matter for contrite self-accusation. As in the case of Moses, "the meekest of men," his anger was not always sinful; and however much his comrades in arms might jest about his "fits of passion" on minor occasions, yet evil-doers knew to their cost that the causes of his righteous indignation usually commended themselves to clear-thinking men—especially men of the thirteenth century, who, whatever were their own shortcomings, had sense and grace to realise that God has His rights in His own creation, and that Louis was always to be found on the side of God.

Pious kings were no rarity in that Age of Faith—our own Henry III is a case in point—and Louis was certainly inferior in intellectual ability to his other contemporary the Emperor Frederick II. But neither Henry nor Frederick could be depended on to make unswerving obedience to the voice of conscience the mainspring of every action; while the loyalty of Frenchmen was almost filial, in their confidence that their

welfare was dearer to their King than life itself; and foreigners likewise had unflinching faith in his disinterested probity when their interests clashed with his. In a word, he was so thoroughly upright that men feared his censure—since all his contemporaries were quite persuaded that a course of conduct which he condemned must be dishonourable and worthy of blame.

We have seen in the last chapter with what prudent foresight his mother inducted him gradually into the management of affairs. In his twentieth year she selected as the partner of his throne Margaret, eldest daughter of Berenger Count of Provence. Minstrels and troubadours were in high honour at the court of this Prince, and they sang of Margaret as “fair in form and feature and still more fair in fervent piety.” High too is their praise of her straightforwardness and tactful wit. “*Loyale et fine*” is the character given her by one, and yet another gives a list of the manifold perfections of mind and heart to be found in this maiden of fourteen summers.

“Never was there damozel more nobly nurtured, gentler natured or more courteous than Margaret of Provence; never one so carefully schooled in sense, urbanity and all good breeding. Richly is she endowed with virtuous amenities and precocious talent. Sound in judg-

ment, prudent in her womanly reserve, she is moreover frankly generous, and kindness is her most winsome charm.”

Of course, in the sunny Provençal land of poesy and *gaie science*, so accomplished a lady must needs have her own special emblem and device. Margaret’s symbol up to the time of her betrothal had been a pod of the *genista* with the motto “*Exaltet humiles*,” and these became the distinctive insignia of the new order of chivalry which the King instituted in her honour. But after her marriage she discarded the *genista*—it was now far more appropriate for her sister Eleanor, the future consort of Henry III—and adopted as her emblem the ox-eyed daisy “*Queen of the meadow and handmaid of Heaven*,” to which she has bequeathed her name. In the ring which the bridegroom ordered to be made for himself there was set a sapphire surmounted by a cross round which were delicately enamelled a lily and a daisy intertwined. On the ring was engraved this significant inscription: “*Hors cet anel où treuver amor?*”* in token that all through life religion was to purify and strengthen his love for wife and Fatherland. Nor was Blanche excluded from that circle of his most sacred affections, for is not blue—in Christian art at least—the recognised

* “Outside this ring where is love to be found?”

symbol of the calm protecting influence of motherhood?

The royal wedding took place at Sens on May 28, 1234, and on the morrow the Queen was anointed and crowned. Two days of splendour and revelry—two nights spent by Louis on his knees in unbroken communion with God.

CHAPTER V

FEUDAL SETTLEMENT WITH ENGLAND

THERE were many points of contrast between the sunny magnificence of Margaret's coronation and the anointing of Louis to the king^y office in the gloomy December eight years before. The most striking difference was the altered attitude of the feudal nobility towards the crown. There were only three notable absentees from the second ceremony: Theobald and Mauclerk were actually engaged in that last little scheme of rebellion which in its failure "threw them higher," and Hugh de Lusignan was kept back by his Countess-Queen.

In the summer of 1241 Louis held high court at Saumur, when he knighted his brother Alphonse and invested him with the government of Poitou—a province having technically within its jurisdiction many of the lands of Angoulême and La Marche. Hitherto Hugh de Lusignan, whether as vassal or as rebel, had been accustomed to treat in person with the Kings of France. His wife, moreover,

went into hysterics and threatened "to go mad with grief and rage" at the mere hint of his tendering allegiance to any save his royal stepson of England. So when at Christmas Alphonse issued a formal summons to his vassals to do him homage at Nevers, the worthy couple appeared before him in no very submissive frame of mind.

"Count of Poitou," cried Hugh, his hand on the hilt of his sword, "I owe no homage to thee nor to any son of Blanche. I am only subject to my Lord, Henry III."

And quitting the presence abruptly he set fire to his lodging at Nevers and rode off in haste with Isabella to make ready for the struggle which was bound to ensue.

To punish this outrage to his delegate, Louis took the field at once. His march south was a triumphal progress, as one by one the castles of La Marche were taken by assault, or surrendered without striking a blow. Hugh—or Isabella—wrote for succour to England. Henry III answered the appeal in person, with a very small retinue but with thirty kegs of coin; for the English Barons preferred paying scutage, to fighting overseas in the interests of La Marche. The two armies came in sight near the town of Taillebourg on the Charente, and great was Henry's consternation when he recognised

around the oriflamme the banners of those Barons whom Hugh in his letters had boasted of as his allies. The Count ungallantly discarded all responsibility.

"Blame your mother and my wife. Those letters were neither written nor sealed by me."

This family quarrel was interrupted by the blast of trumpets and the war-cry "Montjoie St. Denis," which told that the King of France was in person on the battlefield. And King Henry, La Marche, and De Montfort Earl of Leicester, looked blankly at one another, for each had sworn fealty to Louis as his suzerain, and an oath was no light matter in the Middle Ages.

So they left the attack to the opposing army; and Leicester drew up his soldiers like a wall of iron bristling with spears, while the archers held their bowstrings stretched taut to the ear—but strictly on the defensive. In vain did the French Chivalry hurl themselves on this living barricade. Again and again their front ranks were driven back to the narrow bridge across the Charente on which the rear guard were already advancing.

"And those behind cried 'Forward,'
And those before cried 'Back.' "

In this confusion King Louis spurred his horse to the van. The sight of his flashing sword,

and the martial ring in his voice, restored confidence to the disordered battalions and once again they rallied and followed him in a desperate charge. It was a hand to hand struggle on the bridge—on boats—in the river itself, and at one time it seemed as if the French King would be captured by Leicester and his men-at-arms. But Archibald of Bourbon and seven other knights kept close to their royal master, warding off the blows and striking right and left with their great swords. Before noon four thousand Englishmen and insurgents had laid down their arms and the rest were in hurried flight towards the town of Saintes.

At nightfall Richard, Earl of Cornwall, came on his own initiative to the French camp, to crave a suspension of arms for twenty-four hours.

“ Right gladly do I grant it,” answered Louis without any pretence at demur. He hoped that this interval for cool reflection would enable the English King to realise the tremendous odds against him, the uselessness of a protracted struggle, and the fearful loss of life further fighting would entail.

But Henry and Hugh spent the hours of truce in mutual recriminations. When safe behind the ramparts of Saintes they resumed their undignified quarrel at the point where the Battle of Taillebourg had broken it off. Bitter invec-

tive was exchanged, and in the end the Count de La Marche withdrew his troops in high dudgeon. It was sunrise as they marched out of Saintes, and just outside the walls of the town they fell foul of a French forage party. Of course a lively skirmish was the immediate result. The clash of arms brought the English from behind the ramparts, just as Louis arrived upon the scene with the main body of his troops. A regular battle ensued, as fierce as at Taillebourg two days before and with a like result.

Henry III fled precipitately without drawing bridle for sixteen leagues. When he reached Bordeaux with the remnant of his army, after two foodless days and two sleepless nights, he sent to ask Louis for a safe-conduct, as he wished to travel homeward through France. He had come easily enough by sea, and his ships were still in the harbour under his windows; but after the double disaster of Taillebourg and Saintes, a leisurely land-journey through the enemy's country was possibly contemplated as no mere bravado but in view of its moral effect upon the people of England.

"Such a request cannot possibly be granted," was the prompt decision of the French Barons.

"God forbid," cried their King, "that I should ever put obstacle to an enemy's departure!"

And seeing that his courtiers mocked at the plight of the haughty monarch who had come to make such an easy conquest of his former territories, he added gravely :

“ Do not exasperate him, nor give him just cause for irritation. The dignity of his position and his present misfortunes have claims on our considerate treatment. Moreover his prayers and his almsgiving plead in his favour at the Mercy-Seat of God, and I doubt not that his wise and noble conduct will soon make us forget the faults which evil counsel has induced him to commit.”

The nobles had no scope for cavilling at this lenient generosity, when the fame of their young King, “ warlike, wise and pitiful,” spread far and wide, and the landowners who had borne arms against him flocked in to do him homage. One after another the keys of all the fortresses north of the Gironde were laid at his feet. Berthold, the bluff and honest warden of Mirabeau, came in his turn.

“ Sire,” he told Louis, “ I have gone down on my knees before my royal master, King Henry, to ask him, with tears in my eyes, if I could hope for succour from him in case of siege, or if it was his good pleasure that I should hold his castle at peril of my life, without hope of help. And he answered me he could not fend

for himself, let alone for others, and so he released me from my oath. That is pure truth, Sire, and so now I am yours—not by choice, as you see, but by constraint. If Henry had but said the word, you would have had to fight me to win my fealty. But now, since I have to yield, I swear to be yours till the day when you have no longer need of my loyal service."

"Gladly do I receive your homage," replied Louis kindly. "Now, take back the keys of your castle and hold it for me. I feel certain it is safer in your keeping than in that of any one else."

Hugh de La Marche with his wife were next to experience the generous treatment meted out by Louis to all the vanquished of the Taillebourg campaign. The courtiers stood around in silence—moved in spite of themselves as they marked the crestfallen dejection of this haughty couple and the delicate kindness with which the King received them. Then an aged knight stepped forward—Geoffrey de Ranson, Lord of Taillebourg, whose long white beard completely covered his corselet of steel.

"Sire," quoth he to Louis, "I have endured such outrage at the hands of this Count that I swore by all the Saints and Angels in Paradise that I would not have my hair cut until I had my revenge. Until this day I have kept my

word," he added, removing his helmet so that all might see the hoary locks floating half-way down his back. "But now, when I behold the noble family of Lusignan prostrate at your feet, imploring pardon with bitter tears, all my wrath is quenched, and my heart is torn in twain with pity for their sorrowful estate. Will some one fetch me a stool?"

And sitting down in front of the King, he gravely produced a pair of shears and cut off his hair and beard amid the applause of the whole assembly.

This little campaign had certainly consolidated the royal authority, and knit the Barons closer to the Crown in bonds of affectionate admiration and allegiance. But Louis considered the glory it brought him, too dearly paid for by the torrents of Christian blood which had flowed, and by the thousands of Frenchmen who had perished of enteric fever—brought on, then as now, by the insanitary conditions of camp life. He would not hear of a triumphal entry into Paris; for his heart was with the widows and orphans of the war, and he commanded that the sums set aside for festivities should be devoted to the alleviation of their distress.

He employed the peace ensured by his victories to prevent, as far as in him lay, any future interference of England in the domestic policy

of France. Henry would never have crossed the seas at his mother's request, had he not reckoned on the support of at least some of the Barons who owed fealty to him as well as to the King of France, and thus were free to choose sides in any quarrel between them. Louis was earnest that this vexed question of divided allegiance should be amicably adjusted. So in 1244 he summoned his feudatories to meet him in Council and told them tersely what he wished.

"No man can serve two masters. Choose ye therefore between myself and the English King and acknowledge the one or the other as your sole suzerain."

It was asking each of them to forego one set of fiefs for the greater good of the kingdom; but the Barons naturally objected to part with any of their property; and, moreover, they valued highly their exceptional position in case of war between the two Lords Paramount. So Louis's proposal came to nought, but his disinterestedness in allowing them to choose their own suzerain stood out in striking contrast to the arbitrary action of the English King, who revenged himself for the disasters of the recent campaign by depriving all Frenchmen of the fiefs they held in England.

Louis deemed it more worthy of a king to annex hearts rather than land, and to establish

with his neighbours a genuine and lasting peace—a peace devoid of rancour, and humiliating to neither party. But it was only in 1254—twelve years after Taillebourg—that an opportunity occurred to put things on a more friendly footing. On his return from the Holy Land he found Henry in Gascony, marrying his son Edward to Eleanor of Castile (a niece of Queen Blanche) and putting down one of those taxation-revolts which seemed chronic in his dominions overseas. Louis invited the whole party to return home by way of Paris, and there was high revelry in his capital—banquets, bonfires and balls, varied by pilgrimages to local shrines, and pleasant excursions into the country. Said Louis to Henry as they strolled side by side in the Royal Forest of Fontainebleau :

“ Our wives are sisters and your son has married my cousin-german. Oh! if men in the lower ranks of life were as near akin as we, how they would love one another in the bonds of brotherhood which God’s own Hand hath knit ! ”

This speech was the beginning of those friendly negotiations which culminated five years later in the Treaty of Abbeville, whereby Louis invested Henry with certain fiefs which he suspected to have been unjustly confiscated in the past, and Henry acknowledged Louis as his feudal superior for all the territory remaining to him in France.

"I have not lost by the exchange," explained Louis when his councillors objected to this lavish and spontaneous cession of land. "The King of England was not my man before, and now he becomes my vassal."

In effect, the personal homage paid by Henry at Paris in the Christmas of 1259 was no mere perfunctory ceremony, as in the case of his predecessors at the Oak of Gisors. The Kings of France had now right of control in the compact English duchy on either side of the Gironde—they could send their seneschals there and admit in their Courts of Justice appeals against local tyranny. The Treaty of Abbeville was not merely the beginning of a long peace between the two crowns. It also did away with the last independent vassal in France.

And so tactfully did the French monarch exercise his powers, so manifest throughout the whole transaction was his upright, disinterested common sense, that Henry and his Barons appealed to him as umpire before coming to blows in 1264. Such an appeal would have been unthinkable in the days of Philip Augustus, but Louis looked at the question with a mind unwarped by passion or self interest. He esteemed his brother-in-law, as we have seen, for his prayers and almsdeeds, and it never entered into his head that so religious a monarch

could deliberately break his word and connive at the oppression of his subjects. From personal knowledge of Isabella of Angoulême he might attribute more of Henry's unpopularity and penury than was fair, to the follies and extravagance of his minority; but although Queen Margaret was own sister to Queen Eleanor, the needy Provençals and poor relations of Savoy knew better than to clamour at Vincennes for such a monopoly of lucrative posts as could be had for the asking at Windsor Castle. Moreover, in France the Commons looked to the King to redress their grievances and shield them from the petty tyranny of the Barons; and we shall see, in a later chapter, how the widening of the royal prerogative seemed to French lawyers of the thirteenth century the only effective safeguard of the peace and prosperity of the realm. Louis was abreast of his times but not ahead; and so, in his famous Award of Amiens, he confirmed the King of England in "the rights and privileges hitherto enjoyed," at the same time exhorting him "to deal gently with the Barons, and let clemency take the place of rancour."

Simon de Montfort and his following never doubted the disinterestedness of his motives or the deliberate conscientiousness of his decision. All the adverse criticism came from his own

feudal Council, who sometimes reproached him for the great pains he took, on this and on other occasions, to prevent foreigners from warring on each other.

"Let them weaken their forces," they advised, "that so we be at peace from their attacks."

"Not so," replied the holy King. "For should the Princes my neighbours perceive that through self-interest I take no pains to mend their quarrels, they will come to hate me, and perchance unite against my kingdom. And I shall be the loser by their enmity—and worse, I shall have offended the God who expressly says: 'Blessed are the Peacemakers.' "

France was not embroiled in the miserable quarrels of the Guelfs and the Ghibellines which were disturbing Italy and Germany, and came to a head in 1239 by the open rupture between Emperor and Pope. Far from profiting by the difficulties of his Imperial neighbour, Louis would not allow his young brother Robert of Artois to present himself to the electors as candidate for the crown, which Frederick II had forfeited *de jure*, by remaining a year excommunicate. He let slip no opportunity of healing the dissensions which were so disastrous for the best interests of Christian Europe; and, when he had reason to believe that the advisers

of the Holy See put obstacles in the way of a peaceable settlement, he gave orders that the Papal levy of a fifth upon all Church-lands in France should not leave the kingdom till the Council summoned at Genoa had time to make an honest endeavour in the interests of peace.

It is impossible to say how much or how little he knew of Frederick's real character; but the Emperor set a high value on his good opinion and wrote lengthy letters to justify the position he assumed as "champion of sovereigns against the encroachments of Rome." The French prelates on their way to Genoa were captured at sea and detained at Naples so that they could not learn the real state of affairs; but they were released with many apologies when the Council was over and had failed to achieve its object. It was on their behalf that Louis wrote to warn Frederick that "the kingdom of France is not so weak that it will submit to be ridden by imperial spurs."

A little later we find the Pope seeking safety at Lyons, and the Emperor granting Louis every facility for collecting supplies for the Crusade from his territories. And—more chivalrous in this than our Henry III—Frederick made no attempt to disturb the peace of France during the six years that its monarch was absent in the East.

Hitherto we have seen in Louis the successful

warrior and statesman, "a blameless King" such as Tennyson has depicted for us in the pages of his *Idylls*. Now we must study him in another aspect—Louis, the sainted "Sergeant of Christ," leading out his Barons to the Holy War.

CHAPTER VI

THE CALL FROM THE EAST

THE troubles in the Holy Land must have largely coloured the “long long thoughts” of Louis’s boyhood. His mother’s nursery tales were all of the warfare against the cruel followers of Mahomet in her own Castile. On each of his birthdays recurred the solemn procession with veiled crosses, to implore God’s mercy on the suffering Christians in the East. Philip Augustus and his veterans had been sharers in the Crusade of Richard Cœur de Lion. And we have seen how the ex-King of Jerusalem fired the boy’s imagination, as he told of his luckless followers still eating their hearts away in captivity under the scorching sun of Egypt.

Then too the guards at the Louvre were always doubled: a necessary precaution, since the French Kings had always refused to pay tribute to the Head of the Assassins, known in history and romance as *Djebel el sheik*, The Old Man of the Mountain. This extraordinary sect of Mahometan fanatics dates back to the First

Crusade, when Hassan Ben Sabah Omar converted his stony patrimony round Mount Thabor into a Paradise of Pleasure with fountains, woods and running streams; and built therein luxurious palaces where he gathered together all that could contribute to the gratification of sensual delight. Young men were transported into this Happy Valley while under the influence of the drug Hashish (whence is derived the word Assassin) and here they were allowed to revel for some days amid scenes of voluptuous pleasure such as the Koran promises to be the everlasting reward of faithful Mussulmans. Then the drug was again administered; and on their second awakening in the outside world these recruits were told they had been in Heaven and would certainly return thither, if they persevered in their obedience to the Old Man of the Mountain and died while executing his commands.

In this manner the Head of the Assassins surrounded himself with a band of fanatics, blindly obedient to his lightest behest and courting death in his cause. Ela Eddin, seventh in succession from Hassan, was feared alike in East and West. Eminent Saracens sought his alliance—still more eminent Christians paid him tribute. Soon after Louis assumed the reins of government, this worthy notified him to insure his life, cash down, against the poisoned daggers

of the Assassins. But our Saint was not the man to contribute to the war-chest of the Infidel. Nay, rumours reached Mount Thabor that he intended taking the Cross himself, to free other Princes from degrading compliance with similar demands. So two Assassins took ship for Marseilles, armed with daggers dipped seven times in corrosive poison. But God was watching over the life of His servant, who was warned in time and sent them back unharmed to their master.

Louis gave very substantial proofs of his sympathy with his suffering fellow-Christians in the East. We have noticed how recalcitrant nobles were sentenced to a term of military duty in Syria, where the various Latin colonies were all ruled by vassals of the French Crown. He was especially interested in the Latin Empire of Constantinople, which dragged on a precarious existence from 1204 to 1261. So generous was his help in men and money, that the Emperor Baldwin, out of gratitude, made over to him the precious relics of the Passion with which Constantine and Heraclius had enriched their Eastern capital. These included a portion of the true Cross "an ell long," the Reed which served Our Saviour as mock sceptre, and the Head of the Lance which pierced His Sacred Heart. The Crown of Thorns, which was also one of the great treasures of Constantinople, was at that

time in the custody of the Venetians, who refused to give it up until payment had been made of certain sums of money which they had advanced to Baldwin in his distress.

Louis gladly made himself responsible for the debt and on August 10, 1239, the two Dominicans, whom he had sent to treat with the Venetians, arrived with their precious burden at the palace of Vincennes. Here, in presence of the court, the seals were verified and broken by the Bishop of Sens, and out of the cedar-wood coffer there was lifted a casket of solid silver enclosing another of gold. Inside this lay the Holy Crown : a cap-shaped framework of rushes large enough for the huge thorns to pierce Our Saviour's Head from the top as well as from the sides. The kneeling King and his courtiers fell prostrate to earth at the sight, and, with sobs and sighs of pity and contrition, they venerated the cruel Thorn-Wreath which had crowned in derision the Brows of the God-Man dying for our sins.

For full nine days the precious relic remained on the high altar of the cathedral at Sens; and then Louis and his brother Robert, barefoot and clad in tunics of plain white wool, lifted the coffer on their shoulders and bore it in the solemn procession which wound slowly through the forest of Vincennes to the high platform,

draped with silk and cloth of gold, which had been erected in the great square of the Faubourg Saint Antoine. Here it rested awhile, that the stream of pilgrims from every parish and pious institute in Paris might have leisure to do it reverence, and then the royal bearers resumed their precious burden, to leave it this time on the high altar of Notre Dame. But this, the grandest church then in Paris, was not to be its final resting place; for the King commissioned Robert of Montereau to design, for the Holy Crown and the other sacred treasures received from Baldwin, that magnificent "*Reliquary in Stone*," carved as delicately as any shrine of precious metal, which is known to this day as "*La Sainte Chapelle*."

This sanctuary took seven years to build, and meanwhile Louis threw himself into his kingly work with renewed hope and vigour. More and more intense grew the passionate longing to fight and suffer for Christ in Palestine, stronger and firmer the confidence that God Himself would open out the way. And so he possessed his soul in patience, while year by year the difficulties at home grew less and the situation in the East became more alarming.

In 1241—while Louis and his nobles were feasting in amity at Saumur, to celebrate the birth of the King's son and the knighting of



Reception of the Holy Crown of Thorns in France

(From an old print)

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his brother—the Mongols had forced their way to the very confines of Germany. And it was told around the camp-fires at Taillebourg how other hordes of these terrible barbarians had welded together for a time, in the face of a common danger, the Moslem and the Christians in the Holy Land; and bade fair—adds the quaint old chronicler—“to reconcile in like manner the Pope with the Emperor, and England with France; and thereafter we may expect them to inaugurate the reign of Antichrist by stabbing their horses in St. Peter’s at Rome.”

These Mongols were ferocious little men with big heads, who fed on raw meat—report said on human flesh—and were so rapid in their movements that their swift little horses covered “three times as much ground in a day as others could manage in three.” They were formidable especially in point of numbers. One set of them swept across the plains of Muscovy—the Russias and Poland—razing to the ground Warsaw and other towns in their line of march. Teutonic knights and Polish paladins made, it is true, a gallant resistance at Liegnitz; but after the battle the barbarians again moved westward to the German frontier, having added that day to their gruesome trophies nine sacks full of human ears.

Parallel to this northern wave, other hordes

of Mongols poured down upon Syria, piling as they passed huge pyramids of skulls on the battlefields around Bagdad. Christians and Saracens fought side by side at Gaza; and the chief of the Assassins sent piteous letters imploring help from the Kings of France and of England. Walter de Brienne, a prisoner in the hands of the Mongols, was hung upon a cross in front of his own fortifications at Jaffa, and the garrison were summoned to surrender or see him die in protracted torture.

“Let me die,” shouted the crucified hero. “Do your duty, and trust me to do mine till the bitter end.”

At length the Mongols forced their way into Jerusalem by one gate, while the terrified inhabitants fled by another. But soon the victors placed images of the Cross in prominent positions on the ramparts, and the Christians, reassured by this apparent respect to the symbol of salvation, ventured back to their homes, only to be massacred amid howls of fiendish derision.

Queen Blanche wrung her hands in agony when rumours of these horrors reached her ears; and one letter from the Pope completely unnerved her. It seemed to Innocent IV that never before had the Church of Christ found herself in so desperate a plight. Blanche ran to Louis’s bedside—for the King lay sick, as it seemed unto death, in his manor of Pontoise.

"Fair Son," she cried, all in tears, "what will become of us? Even the Bark of Peter is like to founder beneath the terrible waves of Mongol persecution."

"Mother," replied the King, "be brave and calm! You have always taught me fortitude by word and by example. Do not now give way to fear. I am firmly convinced that God will send us comfort amid these grievous afflictions. If He but will it, these barbarians will be driven back to their native haunts. Or if it be His good pleasure to allow them to wreak their fury upon us, why then let them do their utmost! It will be but sending us the sooner into His blessed Paradise."

But though Louis spoke thus bravely, and was really resigned, as he said he was, to whatsoever Divine Providence saw wise to decree—yet his grief for the afflictions that were overwhelming Christendom did but aggravate his physical sufferings; and soon it was judged expedient to administer to him the last consoling rites provided by Holy Church for the needs of her dying children. He received Extreme Unction with calm and piety, in presence of all his court; and then each member of his household approached his couch in turn, to receive an affectionate word in recognition of past services and to be pointed out to Queen Margaret as having special claims to her future favours.

But if Louis could thus face death with equanimity, France was by no means resigned to lose so merciful and so valiant a King, "the Prince of all good justice, who loved the poor and protected the lowly against the great." Prayers for his recovery were offered up throughout the kingdom: each shrine had its steady stream of pitifully pleading pilgrims. The relics of St. Denis and of the other great saints revered in Paris were transported to Pontoise in solemn procession, and the whole metropolis seemed to have turned out to swell the escort. The Bishop of Paris himself carried to the sick-room the Sacred Crown of Thorns and the other relics from the Sainte Chapelle.

But it seemed as if where human remedies had failed, the Divine Physician did not will to intervene. For several hours Louis lay in lethargy in the darkened room, while the doctors in attendance whispered mournfully:

"No hope! The King is dead!"

With noiseless steps the two Queens and the royal Princes passed out into the ante-chamber, and two attendants alone remained to close the half-shut eyelids and compose the rigid limbs.

But all the time there thundered in those trancéd ears a voice which seemed to reach him from the far-off East:

"King of France! King of France! Behold

the Holy City saturated with reproaches and glutted with cruel outrage. It is thou—*thou*—whom God has chosen to avenge the insults offered there each hour to His Divine Son.”

And suddenly, the terrified watchers saw the King sit up in bed, and from those lips, which they never hoped to hear speak again, the words thrilled clear as clarion :

“ In the Highest Heaven, the Dayspring from the East is flooding me with light ! And God’s grace recalls me from among the dead ! Blessed be Thou, *Beau Sire Dieu* ! Accept the oath which I make to take the Cross ! ”

His voice reached the mourners in the ante-room and they rushed in, to find Louis sitting up in bed, his hand uplifted, and his look fixed on things beyond our earthly ken, while over and over again the same sentence fell from his lips :

“ Lord ! O Lord ! accept my vow to take the Cross ! ”

Blanche shivered at the words and stood there as if turned to stone, her wide-staring eyes fixed on her son, as if, says the chronicler, “ she would rather have seen him dead.” William of Auvergne, the Bishop of Paris, was sent for at once.

“ My Lord Bishop,” exclaimed the King, as soon as he saw him enter, “ I insist on your giving me the Cross for overseas.”

Straightway Queen Blanche, Queen Margaret, the Princess Isabella, and the Counts of Artois, of Poitiers and of Anjou, all fell on their knees at his bedside and pleaded with clasped hands outstretched towards him :

“ Sire, dear Sire, for the love of Our Most Holy Redeemer, wait until you are wholly healed ! And then, O Lord our King, then shall you do the thing that seemeth best in your eyes.”

The Bishop joined his entreaties to those of the royal family, but Louis held firm.

“ Be it known to you all,” he said in his mild, even tones, “ that neither drink nor food shall pass through my lips, until I have on my shoulder the Cross for the Holy War. My Lord Bishop, must I repeat it ? Once again, I require it at your hand.”

Then William of Auvergne called for a silken cord of red which he fashioned in the shape of a cross, and trembling with emotion presented it to the King. Louis in a transport of enthusiasm pressed the Cross to his heart, to his eyes, to his mouth, and then ordered it to be fastened on his shoulder.

“ Know ye for a truth that I am now completely cured,” he cried with a loud voice.

And indeed his smiling features bore unmistakably the stamp of perfect health.

He lost no time in dictating a letter to the Christians in Syria, exhorting them to patience, with the assurance that he had taken the Cross and would speedily come to their rescue or to die in their midst. But more than three years were to elapse between the King's vow and his departure from Aigues-Mortes for the Holy Land. There was much to be done in the busy interim; for he had to raise an army of willing recruits, to find funds for its equipment and sustenance, and to provide for the good order and government of his kingdom during his prolonged absence overseas.

CHAPTER VII

THE START FOR THE CRUSADE

IT was October 15, 1245. The court was at Paris to assist in the cathedral of Notre Dame at a stirring sermon delivered by the Papal Legate, on the distress and perilous situation of the Christians in the East. Suddenly the King leapt to his feet and in his turn addressed the listening multitude.

“Can you hear of the tortures and the humiliations inflicted on our brethren beyond seas, without shedding tears of compassion, blushing for shame and quivering with a virtuous indignation? Picture to yourselves the Holy City. Its streets run blood; for old men and young, helpless women and children have there been massacred; and their bodies lie unburied, to be trodden underfoot by the infidel, or devoured by the dogs and the birds of prey. And these things are happening in the land where our own fathers have fought and bled. See this sword which I now wear. It has flashed in the Holy War in the grasp of my grandsire. And

please God it shall flash there again in my grasp, and in the van ! God calls us to the fight ! Let us rally round His standard and if need be shed the last drop of our blood to win back His Holy Sepulchre. God wills it ! God wills it ! " he cried as he brandished his sword above his head ; and the whole congregation took up with enthusiasm this cry of the Crusaders :

" God wills it !—Dieu le veut ! "

Before the echoes of that great shout had died away in the vaulted roof of Notre Dame, the three brothers of Louis were at his feet, begging for the Cross of the Armoured Pilgrims ; and their example was followed by the knights and men-at-arms in the church. Even the Queen, the Countesses of Artois and of Poitiers and a bevy of noble ladies vowed to follow their husbands overseas, and the bishops and prelates present—yea, even the Holy Father's legate himself—enlisted for the Holy War.

As we glance along the glorious roll-call of the comrades of St. Louis in this Crusade, we find inscribed thereon the names of every distinguished family in France : De St. Pol, de Bourbon, de Bethune, de Montfort and others equally illustrious in their country's annals ; but none more interesting to future generations than the genial Seneschal of Champagne, John, Sire de Joinville, who was to St. Louis what

Boswell was to Johnson and the Bishop of Bellay to St. Francis of Sales, a chronicler minutely accurate and intensely sympathetic. Lovers of law and order were not sorry to see the Sire de Coucy, Peter of Brittany, and the Count and Countess de la Marche, with the Cross on their shoulder, and fully determined so to comport themselves as to win mercy from God and the esteem of worthy men. Many Englishmen too were eager to share in the glory, the perils, and the merits of the expedition, and none whose deeds reflected greater honour on their country than Longsword Earl of Salisbury.

For the next two months Queen Margaret and her ladies were kept busily at work, embroidering crosses in crimson and gold; for the King had a little plan of his own in connection with the Christmas festivities. It was an old feudal custom that on delivery of a fief to a vassal the suzerain should give him a token that henceforth he was his *man* and bound to maintain his quarrels. This token (known as *livery*) was oftentimes the badge or emblem of the Lord embroidered on cap or sleeve, but sometimes it was a cloak or *cape of maintenance* in his special colours. In the royal household of France such short cloaks were usually a personal gift from the King to the vassals in attendance at the great feudal festivals—Christmas, Easter and Whit-

suntide. On Christmas Eve, 1245, Louis took care that one of the Crosses made by the Queen and her ladies should be fastened conspicuously to every livery it was his good pleasure to grant, and matters were so arranged that the courtiers only perceived the pious fraud (as Matthew Paris terms it) when they were kneeling in their places in the Chapel Royal for Midnight Mass. It was the time and place for generous resolve; and after the Holy Sacrifice the greater number hastened to assure the King that they willingly assumed the obligations attached to the crusading symbol which he had imposed upon them in holy mirth.

Louis had chosen discreetly the recipients of his royal gifts that Christmastide. There were many in attendance at the court who had come for the express purpose of protesting against his departure for the East; and the head of the opposition was, as was natural, the Queen Mother. It was the first time that her son's will clashed with hers, and their divergence of views was a grief to both. And when Louis met his Barons in feudal council he found that many of his wisest and most trusted advisers sided with Blanche. The Bishop of Paris was the first to speak. He it was who had received the King's vow, and he now pronounced it null and void, given the serious nature of Louis's illness and

his exhausted condition when he pronounced it. Other members of the royal council argued that the fulfilment of this vow would be inexpedient and hurtful to the best interests of France. For war was still raging in the southern provinces, where the heresy of the Albigenses was ever fruitful in civil strife; and the contest between the Emperor and the Papacy was a standing danger to the adjoining states. Then, the English were burning to avenge their defeat at Taillebourg and Saintes and to recover their lost possessions; while the peace and prosperity which was the immediate fruit of these victories to the French, needed the fostering care of the firm and sagacious monarch whose justice men had learnt to trust.

Last of all Queen Blanche urged her views with the passionate earnestness which had erstwhile bent to hers the determined will of King Philip Augustus.

“ My son, God has entrusted to me the care of your childhood and the government of your kingdom through a long series of anxious years. I have thus earned the right to remind you with authority of your duties as a monarch and as the father of a family. But I prefer to plead with you as a mother. You know it, Louis, I love you fondly. My life is now drawing to a close, and if you leave me we may never meet

again on earth. Happy indeed shall I deem myself, if I die without hearing of great disasters in the East! Since the day—a year agone—when you swore your vow, you have been deaf to my counsels and entreaties. But if you have no pity for my sorrow, think at least of your little children, whom you forsake just when they have most need of a father's example and advice. Are they not at least as dear to you as the Christians in the East? My son, my son, if tidings reached you in far-off Asia that your children and your kingdom were in grievous peril through your absence, would you not hasten back at once to our help? And yet your departure will plunge us into intestine factions and foreign invasion. Your duty lies in Europe, where God would have you show yourself a good King, the father of your people, and a shining example to Christian rulers. Send money to Asia—send armies if you will,—but God does not require from you the fulfilment of a vow so contrary to the manifest plans of His Providence. Our God, so full of mercy, stayed the hand of Abraham about to sacrifice his only son—He will not have you put in jeopardy a life so necessary to your family and to the safety and prosperity of your realm."

Louis was deeply moved by Blanche's grief, and gently caressed her before he rose to reply to the arguments of his Barons.

“ My friends, you are all aware that my resolution is known throughout Christendom. By my orders all things are being put in readiness for the Crusade, and foreign Princes have been formally notified that I am leaving my states to go to Asia. The Christians in Palestine rely on my plighted word that I shall come promptly to their assistance. And now you deem it consonant with my honour that I should alter my plans and break my promise—yea, mine oath. However, as you think—as my mother thinks—that I was not in my right mind when I took the Cross, I make no difficulty in removing it from my shoulder and giving it back to the prelate from whose hands I received it.”

He suited the action to the word. Dead silence prevailed in the hall. The King had yielded to their persuasion, and now each man present felt distinctly disappointed. But there was more to come. Again the King’s voice rang out in the breathless silence, and there was no mistaking its jubilant sincerity.

“ To-day, you cannot call me sick or delirious. And it is in the plenitude of my reason and my royal will that I solemnly declare I shall neither eat nor drink till the Cross is again upon my shoulder. I am pierced with grief at the reproaches, murmurs and tearful pleading I have borne with until now. Realise better

henceforward your duty and mine, and help me in the pursuit of true glory, in obedience to the dictates of honour and of conscience. Do not give way to vain alarms about the safety of my family and kingdom during my absence. My trust is firm in the God who gave me victory at Taillebourg, and who now sends me forth to defend His cause in Asia, while He looks after the welfare of my children and pours down blessings upon France. You say that things will go ill here, while I am fighting overseas. Not so, even humanly speaking. I leave the regency in the hands of my mother, who so skilfully conducted affairs of state when I was too young to govern. Let me keep the solemn engagement to which I am pledged in the sight of God and men; and never forget that for you and for me there can be no obligation more sacred and more binding than the oath of a Christian and the word of a King."

The whole assembly responded as with one voice :

" God speaks by your mouth. We no longer oppose His Holy Will!"

The Crusade did not so wholly absorb the mind of Louis that he took no thought for securing the good administration of the realm in his absence. There were family lawsuits all over the country which bade fair to drag on till they

became hereditary feuds. The King's Justices received orders to adjust all such differences as expeditiously as was compatible with the rules of equity, or at least to insist that all litigants who would not accept their verdict as final, should swear a truce with their adversaries for the space of five years. A royal decree moreover—quite in accordance with the spirit of the age—secured to every Crusader immunity from arrest for debt during three years, to date from his actual departure for the Holy Land.

In setting his house in order, Louis was careful to leave no bad debts of his own behind. "Restitution bureaux" were set up by his command on all the royal demesnes to make good any losses sustained at the hands of unjust and rapacious agents for the Crown. And in every city two Commissioners were named with exceptional powers to see that advantage should not be taken of the King's absence to oppress the weak and unprotected, or to grind the faces of the poor.

Queen Blanche was appointed Regent of France, with full powers to choose and to change the members of her Council and other officials. Louis also entrusted to her the administration of the royal manors and the guardianship of his three children—Louis, Philip and Isabella.

There was comparatively little difficulty in

raising funds for the expedition. All ecclesiastics paid without demur the tithe levied, with Papal sanction, on the income of their benefices. The towns, whose liberties Louis had so strenuously defended against the encroachments of local magnates, now proved their gratitude by voting him very liberal subsidies. He had been a kind and indulgent landlord to the farmers on his demesnes, and these in their turn willingly agreed to pay him a full year's rent in advance.

Voluntary contributions flowed in. The poor gave their pence, and the rich in generous measure the price of their accustomed luxuries. Many lords sold their jewels and mortgaged their lands, to equip at their own expense the men-at-arms who followed in their train; while those usually exempted from personal service in the royal armies, by age, infirmity, sex or imperative duty, felt all the more bound to make sacrifices in money if not in blood. But—an exceptional thing in the annals of the Crusades —this time no usurers were found base enough to profit by the necessities of warlike enthusiasm. And—for the first time too—the departure of a Christian army to war in the Holy Land did not furnish a pretext for outbreaks of persecution against the Jews.

During these three years, the town of Aigues-Mortes sprang up among the stagnant lagoons

in the delta of the Rhone. The place is now some miles inland; but when Saint Louis acquired the site on which it stands, it was suitable as a port for the convenience of his Crusaders, and as a dépôt whence supplies for their use could be shipped off periodically to the island of Cyprus and other friendly ports in the Levant. For Palestine, be it remembered, was at this period ravaged by the Tartars: there was not food enough to supply the natives, and certainly none to spare for another invading army. Then too, it had to be taken into consideration that all the ports in Syria were closed to Christians. St. Louis contemplated effecting a landing in Egypt, and working his way eastward across the isthmus. Fighting was to be allowed for, of course, in the delta of the Nile, and possibly the establishment there of a Christian colony to serve as base and keep open communications with the West. So spades and ploughs and other farming necessaries were also stored up at Aigues-Mortes. Honest artisans from the towns, and weather-beaten tillers of the soil were eagerly welcomed among the recruits; for in his far-reaching policy the King looked upon these as reliable colonists both in Egypt and in the Holy Land. But he would not allow in his army men of evil character who did not give genuine signs of a desire to amend—such men,

for example, as had brought disgrace on the Christian arms in the days of his great-grandsire Louis VII, and broken the heart of Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, the sainted preacher of the Second Crusade.

The brothers-in-arms of St. Louis set sail from Aigues-Mortes, in peace with God and man, and with all their worldly affairs arranged as though they were taking a final farewell of home and fatherland. One of the number—the Sire de Joinville, Seneschal of Champagne—tells us in his quaint roundabout fashion how, in Easter-week 1248, he gathered together his dependents in his hall and held high revel with them and with his brother from Vaucouleurs and all the rich men of the district. And having well eaten and drunk with them throughout the week, he said to them on the Friday :

“ My friends, I am departing overseas and know not whether or no I shall ever return. If there be any here whom I have wronged or who has any complaint to lodge against me, let him speak now, for I wish to make amends.”

These were no idle words; for when he was well assured of the lawful claims against him, he mortgaged his lands to his friends to obtain funds wherewith to pay his debts and to contribute to his share of the ship which, with three other lords, he had chartered to convey themselves

and their knights and men-at-arms to the Holy Land. At Pentecost they attended the Feudal Court which Louis had summoned at Paris, and there they watched the royal lieges "do their faith and homage to the King and take oath that loyalty they would bear to his children if any evil chance befall his person in the voyage overseas." Joinville was called upon in his turn: but great as was his reverence for Louis, his conscience would not allow him to swear fealty otherwise than to his immediate suzerain the Count of Champagne. And then the good Seneschal went to confession, and spent the two months before they sailed, in wandering with scrip and pilgrim's staff from one holy shrine to another; for he dared not trust himself even for a flying visit to "his dear children and his fair castle at Joinville which he had so strongly close to his heart."

Immediately after this high court at Pentecost, Louis bade a solemn farewell to his good city of Paris. On Friday, June 12, he went very early with his three brothers to fetch the oriflamme from the Abbey of St. Denis. Then, in full armour, but barefoot, the pilgrim's staff and bourdon in his gauntleted hand and the pilgrim's scarf placed crosswise over his corselet, he went on to Notre Dame for Mass and Holy Communion. After he had finished his devo-

tions, both Queens and the other members of the royal family—all barefoot—walked with him as far as the Abbey of St. Antoine, where he mounted his horse and waved his adieux to the loyal crowd who had followed him from Notre Dame.

He had still some farewell visits to pay at Cluny and other religious houses. We are given glimpses of him as guest of the Friars Minor: kneeling humbly in the chapter house to solicit the prayers of the brethren—dining in the refectory and providing the repast—waiting well pleased at the church door because his brother of Anjou lingered long at his devotions—or seated in the dust of the unpaved church at Auxerre and inviting the brethren to sit in holy converse around: “Come, sweet sons, and listen to what I have to say to you.”

There was an otherwise important halt at Lyons where Innocent IV, who was still there in exile, solemnly blessed the Christian hero and his enterprise. And, at the Rocher Guyon further down the Rhone, Blanche was finally induced to tear herself from her “fair and tender son.” “My heart misgives me,” she kept repeating, “that never here below shall we meet again.”

At length the coarse grass and marshy land round Aigues-Mortes came in sight, and the

miles of barren beach where the yellow sands stood out in vivid contrast with the deep blue of the Mediterranean. One hundred and twenty-eight ships were riding at anchor, besides a number of smaller craft. Two Genoese were in command of the fleet, and the navigation of each vessel was—as customary in the thirteenth century—in the hands of an experienced Italian seaman. On August 25 all was in readiness and the anchors were weighed.

“The gate of our ship was opened,” says Joinville, “to allow our horses to enter; and, when we were all aboard, it was shut fast and caulked as tight as a tun of wine. Soon the master mariner called to his folk who stood awaiting orders near the prow:

“‘Is all in readiness? Can we start?’

“They answered ‘Yea,’ and forthwith set their sails in the Name of God, while the priests and clerks aboard sang *Veni Creator Spiritus* from begininng to end.”

Like many another doughty warrior in the expedition, Joinville had never before beheld the sea, and the first sight of its heaving immensity aroused in his soul a fear by no means ignoble.

“Mad must he be,” he quaintly remarks, “who would face such a peril with sin in his heart. For when falling asleep in the evening one knows not if the awakening on the morrow will not be in the depths of the sea.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE SERGEANT OF CHRIST

THE voyage lasted less than a month. It was August 25, 1248, when the Crusaders embarked at Aigues-Mortes and they sighted Limasol in Cyprus on September 20. Piled up on the beach were the stores which they had sent from France—great casks of wine stacked in groups as big as barns, and corn waving in hills of delicate fluttering green, for the equinoctial rains had caused the top layers to sprout. On the quay was King Henry de Lusignan, waiting to give his guests a right royal welcome and the first of a series of splendid entertainments—too splendid, alas! and far too frequent.

There was great enthusiasm throughout the island. Many of the nobles and Church dignitaries took the Cross and promised to accompany Louis to Egypt if he would but wait until the spring. We know not what specious arguments were brought to bear upon the sainted warrior-statesman; but his usually cool judgment

seems to have been in this instance at fault. He yielded to their entreaties; and the delay gave the enemy time to organise defence, while his own troops deteriorated in their enervating and voluptuous winter quarters. Cyprus, it is well known, was famous in Greek mythology for its worship of Aphrodite, the sea-born goddess of impurity; and the convivial qualities of its wine have been sung by no meaner authority than Solomon. There was no discipline in the Christian camp and soon no ready money, for the keen-witted Cypriots knew how to unite profit with pleasure. The sudden change in climate and habits was in part responsible for the plague which carried off some of the best and ablest of the captains, including the Scotsman, Patrick Earl of Dunbar. Disputes arose between churchmen of the Greek and Latin Rites, between the Military Orders of the Templars and Knights of St. John, between the Genoese and Pisan navigators, and between the refugees from the different Christian colonies in the Holy Land. Louis's sympathies must have been with the insubordinate grumblers among his own followers who had come abroad to fight and seemed determined to get themselves shipped off to Egypt as undesirable aliens. And yet these were just the men whom it was possible to coerce into respectability.

But in his patience the King possessed his soul, and his longanimity triumphed in the end. His wisdom as arbitrator, his firm attitude towards mutineers, his generous gifts in money to the destitute knights, and the Christ-like charity of his dealings with the sick and the fallen—all these qualities shone out bright amid the difficulties of his position, and the fame of his virtues travelled eastward as far as the Persian Gulf. Dwellers in Mesopotamia recalled with bated breath the ancient prophecy that a King of the Franks was to destroy the religion of Mahomet, and from his sceptre or his sword towns and kingdoms would arise in the desert where peace and prosperity would usher in the name of Christ. And so Christians and Mahometans flocked from Syria to see this wondrous King of the Franks and listen to his words of wisdom. Envoys from the Khan of Tartary came too, with honeyed lies on their lips, that their master was a Christian at heart and anxious to further the Crusade. They dined at the royal table, edified the Christians by their numerous devout prostrations at High Mass, and finally they carried back to their Khan many friendly gifts from Louis, including a scarlet tent fitted up as a chapel and embroidered with Scripture scenes dealing with the Incarnation and Death of Our Lord.

At last, on Whitsun Eve, the trumpets heralded with martial blare the order to embark for Damietta. As far as eye could reach, the sea looked covered with gaily painted cloth, so numerous and so varied in blazonry were the sails set to catch the breeze.

There were eighteen hundred keels in all—one hundred and twenty being *Dromonds*, huge warships with three decks of oars and turrets for bowmen and catapults.

But the wind veered; and soon stress of weather forced many vessels to put back to port, while others were dispersed on the high seas or driven towards the Asiatic coast. So it was the dawn of the fifteenth day when "the look-out shouted 'Land in sight' and forthwith made the sign of the cross." The joyful cry passed on from ship to ship, and the Crusaders hurried on deck half dressed, to fling themselves on their knees in prayerful emotion, at sight of the long stretch of yellow sand with the minarets of Damietta glittering in the distance. Louis was the first to rise to his feet. The moment for action had come and for short, soldierly, soul-stirring speech.

"Friends! Let Heaven but find us linked closely heart to heart, and we shall be invincible. As you see, the report of our valour has caused this coast to be strongly fortified. All the

better. These precautions of the enemy will enhance the glory of our success. But remember! On the battlefield I am no longer King of France but Sergeant of Christ. Let me go before you and take my proper share in the perils of the fight—as befits a Crusader like unto yourselves, a man whose life like yours is in the hands of God."

This address aroused a loyal response in all his hearers. "One in heart for Religion, Glory and France," muttered the warriors as they clasped hands in the grip of brotherhood. Joinville made straight for two knights whom he knew to be at variance, and forced them to a reconciliation by the solemn assurance that their ill-will would bring down a curse on the army and perhaps hinder the conquest of Egypt.

Meanwhile the enemy had not been idle. As soon as the fleet hove in sight, the great bell of Damietta—a trophy of a previous Crusade—boomed out the alarm. Instantly the beach swarmed with armoured Saracens, "very fine folk to look at, and the noise they made with their horns and the clashing of their great cymbals was frightful to hear and very strange to the French."

On board the King's ship a council of war was hastily convened. "Shall we land at once?" was the question at issue. Most of the

captains considered the place ill-chosen, for the enemy's forces were concentrated in its defence. They counselled to wait till the vessels dispersed in the great storm had time to come up.

"There is sound wisdom and prudence in this advice," said Louis. "But I believe that our hesitation would increase the hardihood of the foe. We are in good battle order at present, and the wind is at our back. If we wait for our friends, what guarantee have we that another gale may not scatter the ships already at our command?"

And, as usual, the King brought his nobles to see with his eyes—not in virtue of his position, but because of the sheer common-sense of his views. The assault was fixed for daybreak next morning.

At nightfall the trumpets gave the signal for prayers on board every ship. And then, while the moonlight shimmered in broken reflection around the keels, the sound of hymns and pious canticles was wafted across the silent waters. Did the veteran watchers on the walls of Damietta recognise perchance the martial melody of that war-song of the Second Crusade? :

"Jesu dulcis memoria
Dans vera cordi gaudia;
Sed super mel et omnia
Ejus dulcis præsentia!"

Devotions did not hinder work. Every man was in readiness, body and soul, for a hard day's fighting on the morrow, and under cover of the darkness the ships took up their allotted positions. One alone was detached from the rest and sent to cruise in the offing. It contained the Queen and her ladies, who were to spend that battle day on their knees, invoking the God of Armies—

“ Whose Eye
Wherever it blazes makes Victory.”

The rising sun found the fleet drawn up in good order, a mile and a half from the mouths of the Nile. By the King's command all the smaller craft—long-oared galleys and flat-bottomed boats—were in two lines between the larger vessels and the land; and these offered a brilliant appearance, as the morning light danced on the shining armour and gay surcoats of the knights and their followers—twenty-six thousand men all told—who were to force a landing under cover of the archers' fire.

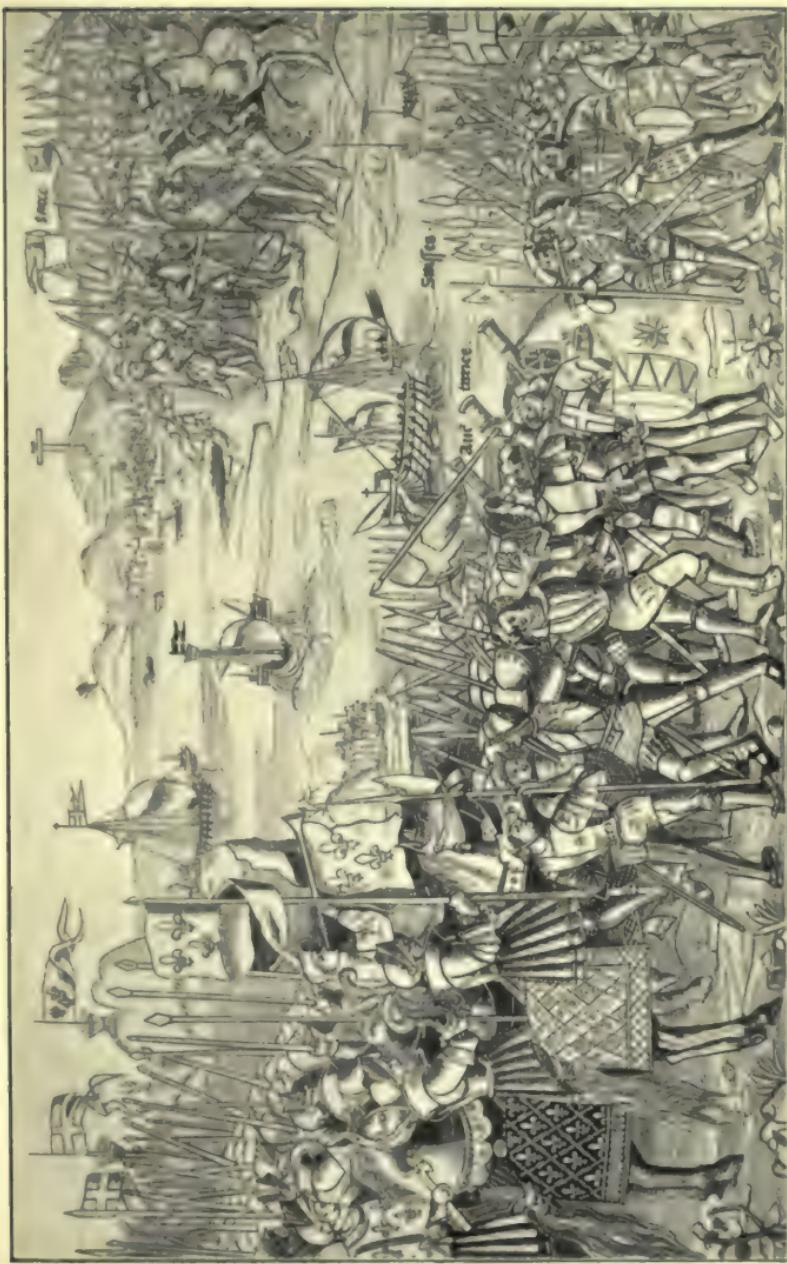
Slowly and in silence the entire fleet moved shorewards till the front rank was a bowshot from the beach; and then the archers let fly, and an answering hail of stones and javelins fell full on the fragile boats. In the confusion thus created, more than one keel was heard to grate

among the shoals of that dangerous and unfamiliar coast; and an involuntary backward movement of the others betokened hesitancy which might result in ignominious flight.

It was the crucial moment, and Louis knew it well. Making the sign of the Cross, a well-knit figure vaulted lightly over the gunwale of the foremost boat on the right, and brandishing his battle-axe high above his head dashed headlong through the surf. The lilies on his surcoat and the golden circlet around his helmet proclaimed him to his followers as their King, a Crusader like unto themselves.

“*Montjoie St. Denis! God wills it! Dieu le veut!*” such was the outburst from thousands of throats as the mail-clad warriors plunged after him into the sea, their number and their impetus, we are told, causing a tide in the tideless Mediterranean, and the waves crept considerably up the strand. It was a disorderly, helter-skelter rush through the breakers; but as the men leapt on to the beach they formed quickly into line of battle and stood, shoulder to shoulder, shields locked and spears advanced —a sharp-pointed barricade against which the infidels threw themselves in vain.

In a miraculously short space of time, the whole Christian force lined up behind this living wall of steel; and, emboldened by this first suc-



The Landing at Damietta

(From an old print)



cess, they fell upon the enemy, again and again, driving them from sandhill to sandhill to seek at last inglorious safety behind the ramparts of Damietta. Louis—need we say it?—fought like a lion, none the worse for having knelt a moment in silent prayer as soon as his feet touched land.

It was noon when the standard-bearer, the last to leave the boats, had fixed the oriflamme to a point of vantage on the beach; and four hours later the Crusaders, in victorious possession of the battlefield, gathered round the Papal Legate to chant a solemn *Te Deum*, while the sea throbbed rhythmically at their feet as if to join in the general thanksgiving. There were few gaps in their ranks; but during the combat the Count de la Marche had reeled into Louis's arms, mortally struck by two arrows, and his eyes, ere they glazed in death, had met an approving smile from the suzerain whose patience he had so sorely tried in life.

While the Christian army were pouring out their hearts in pious gratitude to the God of Victories, they saw in the distance, a line as it were of gleaming fire, where the slant rays of the westering sun lit up the corslets of the Saracens on the ramparts of Damietta—and as they gazed upon the triple lines of fortifications a misgiving may have entered the minds of some

that this was the stronghold before whose walls John of Brienne had wasted three weary years. The Saracens in their turn had a good view of the victorious battalions massed for jubilant thanksgiving, and the sight increased the panic which prevailed in the town.

The Sultan was lying sick at a village some leagues distant, but he had been kept informed of the trend of events by carrier-pigeons, let loose at intervals since the Christian fleet first came in sight. As no word of encouragement or reproach reached Damietta in reply, the Emirs concluded that their master was dead and hurriedly deserted their posts to ascertain their prospects under his successor. The dearth of responsible officers augmented the disorderly confusion within the city. During the night there was a cruel massacre of the European settlers, with a general looting of property, and then the soldiers set fire to the principal buildings and started for the south.

Next morning the Christians marched in; and their first official act of possession was to purify the great mosque, which the Legate immediately consecrated as a church in honour of Our Lady. Mass was said, and then the warriors dispersed along the corpse-strewn, fire-blackened streets to get a closer view of their bloodless conquest. And as they marked the strength of its fortifi-

cations—thick walls, wide and deep trenches, skilfully disposed redoubts,—they said, in their simple faith, that nothing short of a miracle could account for the cowardly flight of the garrison.

CHAPTER IX

ENTANGLEMENTS IN THE DELTA

WE have lingered over Louis's brilliant beginning at Damietta, because—let us state it frankly at the outset—the rest of his campaign in Egypt was, from a human point of view, a series of mishaps. From a human point of view we say,—for the student who looks in history for the workings of Divine Wisdom “strongly and sweetly disposing all things,” may be permitted to conjecture that the capture of the city was made so exceptionally easy, in order to give him a footing in that land where he was to suffer and to merit so much. Hitherto we have seen him at the top of opinion in Europe, and “not overmuch uplifted in prosperity.” In the next few chapters we shall find abundant justification for that tribute of admiring praise wrung from the Arab poet in his pæan of victory :

“Disaster has wrestled with the King of the Franks, but never was it able to fell him to the ground.”

Louis entrusted the guard of Damietta to a picked body of five hundred men. He intended using the city as a base for his army, and here he installed the non-combatants—the Queen, her ladies, and the sick. But he had no intention of quartering his forces on the inhabitants. The memories of Cyprus were too recent; and the best hope of maintaining order was to lodge the main body of the troops in a palisaded camp some miles away, in that part of the Delta called the Island of Mehalah, round which the Nile formed a natural moat. Here was set up his own pavilion—the famous scarlet tent so much admired by the Saracens—and here he spent the summer and autumn, giving to his men a right royal example of frugal simplicity, minute obedience to military regulations, and cheerful endurance of the hardships incidental to life under canvas during the hot season in Egypt.

It seems to us now that it would have been sounder policy to follow up the first success without allowing the enemy time to recover from the panic of unexpected defeat. Indeed the Grand Masters of the Military Orders, who knew well the country and the conditions of Eastern warfare, were both of opinion that the Crusaders mustered men enough to take the field. But Louis preferred to wait “till the

Nile had risen and gone quietly back to bed." He had given his word not to push on to Cairo without the Count of Poitiers, and he had no means of knowing that this Prince was only able to embark at Aigues-Mortes on August 25—exactly a year after the departure of the main body of the Crusaders. And so the summer and autumn months were frittered away in forced inaction, for the expected transports from France were only sighted in the offing at the end of October.

Meanwhile things were going from bad to worse in the camp at Mehalah. The knights and men-at-arms, whom we have seen pray so devoutly before and after the combat and fight like lions in the interim, fell away from their duty in the long days of idleness which supervened. Again, as at Cyprus, money was squandered in gambling and riotous debauch; and insubordination and lax discipline became fraught with graver consequences as the troops were now in the enemy's country.

And that enemy was the astute old Sultan of Cairo, Saleh Ayub (great-nephew of Saladin), who would never have suffered the Crusaders to land, had not a mortal illness kept him stretched upon a bed of pain. When tidings reached him that the Franks were masters of Damietta, his anger knew no bounds. Fifty-four heads—off

the shoulders of the Emirs and prominent citizens concerned in the dastardly surrender—availed as little to allay his fury as to repair the damage to the cause of Islam. The Sultan had himself conveyed to Mansourah, a fortified town on the Nile half-way between the coast and Cairo, and from here he despatched an insulting letter to the great King of the Franks: congratulations on his safe arrival, regrets that he had imagined it necessary to bring such enormous supplies for such a short stay in Egypt as he was intended to make, and enquiries as to the exact date of his re-embarking for Europe, so as to secure an enthusiastic send-off. To these taunts Louis at first deigned no reply; but when Saleh wrote in more serious strain challenging to a pitched battle on June 25, at any spot he might choose to select, a curt soldierly answer was penned, stating that the French King had come to Egypt uninvited and would depart at his own convenience; that he would neither accept the date nor choose the site for battle, since all days and all places were alike good enough to fight with infidels; and that he would treat the Sultan as an enemy until God so touched his heart that the Christians might regard him as a brother.

From his sick-bed at Mansourah, Saleh continued throughout the summer to recruit his

army and direct his military preparations. He had no idea of keeping his soldiers idle; and his horsemen hovered round the camp in the Delta to harass the invaders and, if possible, to exhaust their strength in guerilla warfare. He promised too a golden bezant to every Mussulman who brought him the head of a Christian.

Louis on his side issued orders to his men to remain strictly on the defensive. It was hard to obey when, as sometimes happened, the Saracens rode up to the very palisades of the camp, shouting taunts and insults, while the Crusaders stood grimly inside, armed to the teeth and chafing with rage because they were not actually attacked. Occasionally it happened that knights and men-at-arms sallied forth in defiance of the royal prohibition, only to find themselves outmatched by the wily and ubiquitous foe. In the dead of night the Saracens ventured inside the palisade, and crept stealthily from tent to tent to earn the coveted gold bezant. They went off as silently as they came, leaving headless trunks as ghastly tokens of their too successful raids; and yet the Frenchmen did not seem to learn the necessity of keeping always on the alert.

Every day the discipline became more and more lax, and the Count of Artois gave woful examples of insubordination, all the more per-

nicious from his rank and popularity. Long-sword of Salisbury bluntly told the King one day that if he could not keep his own brother in order he was unfit for the duties of his royal position.

The hot, imperious young man was also at variance with the other captains as to the plan of the coming campaign. Mauclerk advised an expedition against Alexandria, so as to secure a second and safer port to keep open the communications with the West. The heads of the Military Orders, on the other hand, wished this second base to be at Jaffa. "From Jaffa to Cairo is an easy march along the usual caravan route, and we could reckon on help from the Saracen Emirs," argued the Grand Master of the Knights of St. John. The Templars, on the other hand, were all in favour of an alliance with Egypt and a campaign in the direction of Jerusalem. All these schemes had one good point in common: they kept clear of the Delta with its network of watercourses, each affording a splendid line of defence to the enemy. But Louis could not brook the idea of intercourse with the infidels, save for battle or for baptism; and he had defeated Peter of Brittany too often in the past to be ready to adopt any roundabout tactics of his suggestion.

Robert's advice pleased him better—an ad-

vance along the Nile in the direction of Cairo—always spoken of as Babylon by the Crusaders. It was a bold scheme which, if successful, would end the war by enabling Louis to dictate his own terms from the capital of Egypt. But it was also a scheme fraught with probabilities of danger; for how could they prevent the enemy from closing in on their rear and cutting off communications with their base?—while the Sultan, if defeated, could fall back upon the upper reaches of the Nile and easily recruit another and a well-provisioned army.

The Count of Poitou on his arrival sided with his brother; and as the reinforcements which he brought from France increased the fighting power to sixty thousand men—more than a third of whom were well mounted—it is not surprising that Louis decided in favour of the bolder course.

So, on November 22, a numerous flotilla of large and small boats sailed up the Nile, laden with armour and stores requisite for the well-being of men and horses; and a few days later the troops marched gaily southward along the western bank of the Damietta branch of the historic river.

The Sultan was dead, but his favourite wife, Sajareldor, kept the fact a secret even when the Emirs, summoned in haste, had agreed in their choice of his successor. The mamelukes

patrolled the palace as if Saleh were still alive, and proclamations were issued in the dead man's name. Active preparations against the Crusaders went on with redoubled energy, albeit the Sultana sent secretly envoys to the Christian camp, offering—in the name of Saleh—the most favourable terms, including the formal cession to Louis of Damietta, Jerusalem and other towns.

But the French were already on the march for Mansourah, and were not to be turned aside from their purpose by proposals whose sincerity they had reason to doubt. Clearly there was no time to lose, for already rumours of the Sultan's death were afloat at Cairo. So in all the mosques throughout the land an earnest appeal was made :

“ To all believers of every rank. The cause of God has need of your wealth. The Franks — Heaven curse them — have landed on our coasts with banners and spears, to seize our cities and lay waste our fields. Breathes there a Mussulman who can refuse to march against them to avenge the outraged honour of Islam ? ”

On December 19, these hated Christians came in view of Mansourah. But the broad Ashmoun canal lay between, with steep and rocky sides and far too deep to ford, albeit it was now the season when the waters in Egypt are at their

lowest. The terrible Greek fire wrought deadly havoc among the boats which they had brought from Damietta, and it was impossible to build a bridge in the face of a garrison armed with this deadly mixture of naphtha, sulphur, soot and vinegar.

The Crusaders decided to throw a dam across the Ashmoun, by hurling into it huge masses of rock from the military engines which served as substitute for cannon in the Middle Ages. The work progressed but slowly; for the current was fairly strong in the canal, and swept away the lighter materials for the dam. The garrison too made frequent onslaughts on the workmen, and not a day passed without fighting of some sort, on the plains or in the water. Worst of all, the merciless Greek fire inflicted grievous injury on everything that came within its range, and rendered useless the movable towers with roofed-in galleries which in ordinary sieges provided efficient cover.

The Sire de Joinville tells us of a terrible night he spent in one of these *cat-castles*, with the cruel alternative before him to remain and be burned alive or desert his post and live dis-honoured. Seven times that night came the Greek fire "like a great fiery-tailed dragon, long as a lance and big as a barrel of vinegar, cleaving the air with a noise like the rumbling

of thunder," and seven times did he and his companions "fall on elbows and knees and cry for mercy to Our Lord in whom alone is power to save." After each such experience a chamberlain came from the King to enquire if all were safe; and the warriors felt encouraged and strengthened to persevere in their dangerous duty, for they knew that their holy King was sharing their vigil and joining his efficacious prayers to their own.

" Each time that our good King Saint Louis heard that we were threatened with the fire, he cast himself on his knees; stretched forth his hands, and lifting his streaming eyes to Heaven cried aloud :

" ' Fair Lord, our God Jesus Christ, preserve me and all my people ! ' "

And thanks to this short and fervent prayer, so frequently repeated, it was piously believed that the damage was in the main restricted to the timbers of the *cat-castles* and the dam at which they laboured fruitlessly for many days. At length a Bedouin Arab promised, for five hundred gold bezants, to show them a ford at four miles' distance by which the whole army might reach in safety the opposite bank. The offer was eagerly accepted.

" At last a chance for glory ! " shouted the Frenchmen. " At last we shall find other enemies to fight, besides this accursed fire ! "

CHAPTER X

MANSOURAH

THE Arab had not deceived them. But the fording of that steep-banked watercourse was likely to prove a tedious process and one fraught with considerable peril, as it was impossible to conceal it from the enemy, whose outposts were stationed close at hand. It was agreed that the Duke of Burgundy should remain in the rear to mount guard over the baggage and what remained of the engines of war, while the Crusaders repeated the manœuvre which had proved so successful at their first landing under the walls of Damietta : the vanguard to line up on the opposite bank and hold the enemy at bay, while the rest of the army waded through the water and fell into rank behind them.

The élite of the cavalry were of course selected for this dangerous and responsible duty : the Knights of St. John and the Templars under their respective Grand Masters, Salisbury with his stalwart Englishmen, and the flower of French chivalry headed by the Count of

Artois. Louis deemed it necessary—the pity is he thought it sufficient—to make his impetuous young brother take an oath on the Gospels that he would not let his valour outrun discretion, nor start in pursuit of the Mussulmans till the main body of the troops had crossed.

The first shock of cavalry was sturdily repulsed, and the Arab coursers seemed scarcely to touch the ground as they galloped back to camp.

“They go quickly,” remarked Artois, “but we shall manage to come up with them.”

It was in vain that both Grand Masters, well accustomed to Oriental manœuvres, assured him that the flight was but a feint. Treachery and cowardice were among the taunts which the sharp-tongued young Frenchman flung at these gallant veterans who had grown grey in the warfare of Christ. They wept with indignation, and the Grand Master of the Templars ordered his comrades to unfurl the *Beauséant*, that famous banner of the Order with its boast of religious poverty—two knights upon one horse. And then he turned to Artois.

“Prince, lead on, whithersoever it listeth thee—for never shall a Templar brook to be called craven or felon. And yet my mind misgives me that Christendom shall rue the rashness of this ride.”

In like manner spoke the Grand Master of the Knights of St. John. Salisbury in his turn reminded Artois that the King's orders were peremptory they should remain where they were to guard the ford. He was called for his pains an "*Englishman with a tail*"—that is, a *coward*—a common jest of the period.

"Count," he thundered in reply, "I shall ride this day so far into danger that you will find it difficult even to keep in sight the tail of my horse!"

And so these exasperated warriors joined with the fiery young prince in hot pursuit of the fugitive Saracens. On and on through the tents of their outpost, startling the Emir Fakreddin out of the perfumed bath where he was painting his beard in preparation for battle—on and on, helter-skelter over the plain till the streets of Mansourah rang beneath their horses' hoofs, till the ponderous gates of the city closed with a clang behind them, and they suddenly realised that they had ridden into a death-trap.

There was nothing for it but to sell their lives at a dear rate. For six hours a hand-to-hand struggle went on in the narrow streets, where there was not room to turn a horse or wield a lance, where on all sides dark faces scowled and scimitars and javelins gleamed, where stones and scalding liquids rained from the housetops. The

Crusaders entered Mansourah at ten in the morning and by three in the afternoon only two were alive. Salisbury had fallen, at the hour when in far-off England his mother in her prayer saw his soul soar aloft to Heaven. His men-at-arms lay thick around him and at his feet the standard-bearer, Robert de Vere, with the banner of England wrapped tightly round his body. Artois, after nobly repairing his headstrong rashness by prodigies of valour, was crushed beneath the ruins of the hut where he and his party were entrenched. The Grand Master of the Hospitallers, grievously wounded, was a prisoner in the hands of the Saracens, but his colleague —sole survivor of the two hundred Templars—managed to reach the Christian camp at night-fall, streaming with blood and his armour hacked and dinted.

Meanwhile the rest of the Crusaders as they crossed the Ashmoun lost no time in coming to blows with the Infidels. When Louis and his retinue passed over in their turn, they halted for a space on a rising ground which afforded a good view of the battle, or rather series of skirmishes, where cries of "Islam! Islam!" mingled with "Dieu le veut!" and it was impossible to distinguish on which side dipped the balance of advantage.

"I promise you," says Joinville, "that never

did I see so fine a man in armour as our King that day, towering a head and shoulders above his bodyguard, with his gilded helmet and two-handed sword of German make."

Louis's trained eye discerned that the enemy's cavalry were far superior in numbers and mobility, and to hinder these from circling round to hem his troops in flank and rear, he gave orders that the oriflamme be moved back to the edge of the canal. By this means he would keep in touch with his base on the opposite bank, and yet be ready to send relief, where most needed, to the battalions in actual conflict. But the plain was so flat and bare of trees that all the incidents which made up the battle were distinctly visible in the clear Egyptian air; and the French knights could not be hindered from joining in the fray when some personal friend or popular leader seemed to them hard pressed and sore bested. Great, especially, was the anxiety as to the fate of the Count of Artois, and very many started off to bring him rescue or company in death. Peter Mauclerk reached the very gates of Mansourah, but had to turn back with darts and arrows sticking yet amid the trappings of his steed. He himself was grievously wounded, and the blood gushed from his mouth as he rose in his stirrups to hurl taunting gibes at the Saracens who followed at

his heels. Joinville too had started for Mansourah without awaiting orders, but a rumour that the King was in the hands of the Saracens made him quickly retrace his steps. The good knight had himself many adventures that perilous Shrove Tuesday; but a quilted garment soaked in vinegar which he snatched from a Saracen served him in good stead as buckler, and he escaped with five wounds, while his horse had in all fifteen.

He found Louis in the thick of the mêlée, laying about him right and left with sword and battle-axe. And the good Seneschal breathed more freely, as he saw him deliver himself single-handed from six Saracens who at one time had fastened on his bridle rein. His standard-bearer kept close to his side, and wherever the oriflamme floated that day the Crusaders were encouraged to fresh deeds of valour, and the Crescent fell back before the Cross.

At last the Christians remained masters of the field, and soon the tired warriors were sound asleep.

And then a Knight of St. John—the Prior of Rosnay—came to ask the King if he had tidings of the Count of Artois. Louis sadly shook his head.

“ My brother died fighting for Christ,” he said. “ His soul is now in Paradise. May

God be honoured in all that He has done for us this day!"

"And as he spake these words," adds Joinville, "many tears could be seen on his face; so the lords and knights who were with him and the good Prior of Rosnay, were much oppressed with compassion, anguish and loyalty."

But there was little leisure that night to indulge in grief, bind up wounds or refresh wearied limbs in needful slumber. Again and again under cover of the darkness the enemy sought to retrieve their losses by unlooked-for attacks on the bivouac. Next morning was Ash Wednesday, and as Louis knelt among his men to receive from the hands of the Cardinal Legate blest dust of the desert in lieu of ashes, he made no pretence to conceal the swollen and reddened eyelids which testified to his grief for the loss of his tenderly-beloved brother.

But this grief did not hinder his solicitude for the general weal. The next two days were spent constructing a bridge across the Ashmoun, and on the early morning of Friday the army was again drawn up in battle array. For the astute commander of the Saracens had shown his men the cuirass of finely-tempered steel, enamelled with fleurs-de-lys, which had been stripped from the body of Robert of Artois.

He persuaded them that this was the breastplate of the redoubtable King of the Franks; and the lying voucher of Louis's death was quite enough to revive their drooping courage and raise a clamour to be led again to the fight.

This time the Crusaders had leisure to adopt the arrangement of troops customary in the West. The King commanded in the centre, while his brothers were in charge of the wings. The main drawback was the deficit in cavalry. The companies on the left fought on foot, and so hard pressed were they by the enemy's light horse, that the Count of Poitou was at one time dragged off as prisoner. But the camp-followers saw the danger and rushed in to his rescue with hatchets, hammers, and any weapon that came nearest to hand.

Anjou had horses, but they became unmanageable when they faced the Greek fire. Louis had to hurry to the assistance of his brother, and the Saracens realised to their cost that he was very much alive. A general mêlée ensued, where prodigies of bravery were wrought on either part; but at last the Christians remained masters of the field, and Louis was able to write to his mother :

“ On the first Friday in Lent the whole of the Saracen forces attacked our camp. God declared in favour of the French, and the Infidels were repulsed with great loss.”

The Christian army, however, was so weakened in numbers and in health that the idea of marching on to Cairo had to be set aside. Instead of returning to the coast for the necessary interval of rest, the Crusaders entrenched themselves on the battlefield itself, still soaked with blood and strewn with the dead. The causeway constructed on the Ashmoun prevented the corpses, which choked its bed and poisoned its waters, from floating downwards to the Nile; so the King gave orders for the canal to be cleared and the dead to be decently interred in deep pits which he caused to be dug. Distressing scenes ensued as the soldiers sought to identify the disfigured features of relatives or cherished friends. The Sire d'Egville in particular, late chamberlain to the Count of Artois, spent days and nights on the banks of the Ashmoun in the vain hope of securing Christian burial for the remains of his beloved master.

Fevers and dysentery were the natural outcome of the tainted, sultry air, putrid water, and the unwholesome fish which formed the staple of their Lenten diet. The Sire de Joinville gives gruesome details of the scorbutic malady which attacked the men; how it withered their flesh to the bone, hardened the wrinkled, blackened skin "till it felt like an old boot," while offensive discharges from the gums rendered the barber's

knife a cruel necessity, to cut away the swollen and corrupted tissues. Joinville himself fell ill and sent for his chaplain to say Mass in the tent where he lay. But while at the altar the priest was stricken with the disease, and the sick man had to get up and support him in his arms while he finished the Holy Sacrifice. “And I never set eyes on him again,” is the suggestive end of the story.

Amidst the horrors of the pestilence the Crusaders kept the laws of the Church as well as they could : the Lenten fast and the Sunday’s observance. The priests were assiduous in their ministrations to the dying and at the side of the grave. The King was ubiquitous in his care for the well-being of his companions—attending to the sanitary arrangements and bringing to each sufferer relief and encouragement.

“Am I not their King and their father?” he answered those who would have him seek a brief respite from his exertions. “They have never spared themselves in my service, and shall I mind a little risk in theirs, while they are lying helpless and disconsolate?”

His very presence brought joy and peace to the dying. His sick servant, Gaugelm, cried out on seeing him approach his bed :

“Now, O Lord, Thou may’st recall me to Thyself since mine eyes have again beheld the glory and the hope of France.”

But there came a day when Louis could no longer drag himself on his charitable rounds, for he was stricken too with the malady and constrained to lie quiet in his tent.

Occasionally a troop of horsemen was seen hovering on the outskirts of the camp; and then the servants of the sick knights arrayed themselves in the armour and blazoned surcoats of their masters, and took their places to repel the assault. But the new Sultan, Malek Moadhem, did not encourage his men to venture near the pestiferous precincts of the Christian camp.

"We have only to cross our arms and wait in patience," he told his Emirs. "The plague is, as usual, our powerful ally and fights well in the cause of the Prophet. I have given my orders," he added with an ugly smile, "and soon there will be famine to finish what the plague has so happily begun."

In fact his troops had already cut off communications between the camp and Damietta, and seized all the ship-loads of provisions that were sent regularly up the Nile. One Flemish galley escaped as by miracle and brought tidings to Louis that every boat on the great river now flew the flag of Islam. By Easter the distress became acute. Eggs were selling at twelve pence each, and a sheep or a pig for thirty pounds. "The Frenchmen, usually so dainty

in their food, were forced by hunger to eat of things unclean and even of their precious horses.”

The saintly King humbly bowed to the decrees of Divine Providence, and to spare his soldiers unnecessary and protracted sufferings sent Philip de Montfort to treat for a truce with the envoys of the Sultan, empowering him to cede Damietta on condition that Jerusalem and the other towns in Palestine were restored to the Christians. Malek Moadhem saw fit to agree to these terms; but he stipulated that the King of the Franks should remain a hostage in his hands. Louis was quite ready to release his brave comrades from their present cruel straits at the cost of his personal liberty.

“I shall set out to-morrow, if need be,” he declared, “for it sometimes becomes a King’s duty to sacrifice himself for the public weal.”

But his followers, of course, would not hear of degrading their monarch to be “their honour’s pawn,” and so the negotiations were broken off.

It was now decided to break up camp and return to Damietta. The grievously sick were placed in the few boats at their disposal; but Louis could not be induced to travel in this comparative comfort. His place was on horseback in the rear—the post of danger and of glory in

a forced retreat. He was not fit to endure the weight of a helmet, but his sword still flashed in his feeble hand and he bestrode an Arab horse in the last degree of attenuation, which had belonged to his brother, the Count of Artois.

It was nightfall when the remnant of the troops began to cross the bridge which had been hastily thrown across the canal for their convenience and which Louis commanded to be destroyed as soon as the last Frenchman had passed over in safety. But he did not remain on the spot to superintend the execution of his order, and those entrusted with it had the criminal recklessness to disobey. And so the enemy too followed over, "numerous as the sands of the desert," and a sanguinary skirmish ensued under cover of the dark.

The sons of Islam hovered along the line of march, harassing the Crusaders by repeated onslaughts. Their attacks were especially directed against the rearguard where the King was in command. Two knights, Sargines and Gaucher de Chastillon, kept on either side of St. Louis to ward off the blows—"like unto the attentive servingmen who brush away the flies from the drinking-cups of their masters." The simile is St. Louis's own. But at last the brave Chastillon fell, pierced by many javelins, before the hut in the little village of Minieh where his

royal master had been forced through sheer exhaustion to seek shelter, and where he now lay sick, as it seemed, unto death.

Things were thus at their blackest, when word was brought to De Montfort that the Emir empowered to negotiate was stationed a few miles away. Malek Moadhem had learnt to respect the valour of the Franks, even in their exhausted condition; and he was ignorant of the strength of the garrison still left in Damietta and of the military resources of Western Europe. Five hundred knights still formed the body-guard of the King, and others were hurrying back as tidings reached them of his present grievous peril.

And so the envoy readily agreed to the original terms. In pledge of good faith his jewelled turban was in the act of being exchanged for the ring that glittered on De Montfort's forefinger. Suddenly a treacherous or dastardly cry spread consternation in the Christian ranks. "A villainous sergeant named Marcel" pushed to the front and shouted :

"Sir knights! surrender, it is the King's command! His life and ours depend on your obedience."

What was there to do but throw down arms, while hot tears of angry humiliation drenched the weather-beaten cheeks? A sinister smile stole over the features of the crafty Emir:

"There is no treating of peace with men who are already my prisoners," he said. "Messire de Montfort, in your quality of ambassador you are free to depart. Go, tell the King of the Franks what you have just seen and heard."

There was a momentary revolt of nature when Louis learnt that he and his army were in the power of the Paynim. But grace soon regained the mastery in his soul, and he had time to groan aloud: "Thy Will, my God, not mine," before the Emir entered in his turn with scant respect for virtue, rank, or misfortune. His eunuchs stripped the Christian hero of everything of value, even to the clothes he wore, and left him almost naked, and loaded hand and foot with heavy chains. But never a sigh or complaint escaped those royal and saintly lips. Only when the crucifix at the foot of his bed was torn from the wall and trampled on with contumely, did his wrath break out in burning words of reproof and in futile endeavour to burst his bonds. The Emir and his satellites made haste to quit his presence; and then an Arab of the lower classes, whom they had left as gaoler, drew nigh to the illustrious captive and respectfully covered his emaciated shoulders with a costly surcoat lined with fur, which had fallen to his share in the recent distribution of spoils.

CHAPTER XI

THE PROUDEST OF CHRISTIANS

NEXT day there was a triumphal water-pageant up the Nile, to escort the prisoners to Mansourah. The captured banners and pennons fluttered gaily in the breeze; and the poops were adorned with boughs and garlands of flowers, while the Mahometans within the boats shouted a song to the martial strains of cymbals, horns and drums.

Thirty thousand of Louis's followers had by this time lost their lives. Not all of these were slain in battle or had fallen victims to pestilence, for the greater number of those who had embarked for Damietta found a watery grave in the Nile or were massacred in cold blood on the shore. Some of the boats were destroyed by the Greek fire or capsized by larger galleys. Egyptian horsemen convoyed them pitilessly along the banks, ready with their daggers to force each man, as he scrambled to land, to choose between apostasy and death. To the

credit of the French be it noted that scarcely any chose the baser alternative.

Joinville had better luck than his companions. He took the precaution to drop quietly his relics and jewels overboard; and then a renegade of his acquaintance declared him to be a kinsman of the King of the Franks, thus securing him honourable treatment as a person of distinction. His armour and weapons were taken from him, it is true; but his captors restored to him a scarlet coverlet lined with minniver which had been the parting gift of his lady mother. They also gave him a drink of water to steady his nerves; for his teeth were chattering, he tells us candidly, both from bodily weakness and from fright. But despite or because of his feeble condition, he spoke feelingly to his comrades of the joys of Paradise where he hoped that the Divine Mercy would soon bid them welcome.

On the whole, Joinville found his gaolers very courteous. They cured him in two days of his scurvy, which was still causing him such humiliating agony; and when they entered Cairo a friendly Emir made him ride beside him to the place where St. Louis and his men were confined. Most of the knights and men-at-arms were in a mud-walled enclosure, which became less and less crowded as at intervals in the night

some were led out, to lose their heads for the Faith or to live inglorious lives of hard labour as apostate slaves.

But Joinville was put with the Barons of France in a hut where they had miserable cheer. The Sultan sent to offer them liberty if they would yield up the towns in Palestine held by the Christians.

“They are not ours to yield,” was the shrewdly truthful reply of Count Peter of Brittany, who acted as spokesman. “Some of them belong to the Emperor of Germany, who would never acknowledge the Sultan as his vassal; the others to the Military Orders, who make solemn vow never to deliver up a castle for the ransom of anyone whatsoever.”

The envoys were furious; for, unwittingly, Mauclerk had answered in the same terms as the King.

“You men care nothing for liberty,” they muttered. “Well, we will send you those who know how to use their swords.” And with this threat they departed.

Soon a tall old Saracen of venerable appearance entered and asked them if they believed their God had become Man for their sakes, had suffered death and risen again.

“If all this be truth,” he added, “take courage, for He certainly can and will repay all that you suffer in His cause.”

"Saying this he went away with his young men," adds Joinville, "much to my relief; for I really thought he had come to cut off our heads."

Next, the Barons were approached individually on the question of ransom. But Louis forbade peremptorily any private treaties of the sort, lest those who had not wherewith to purchase their freedom should languish their life long in prison. He himself was quietly determined to pay for all—for himself the last, but not in coin.

The King was lodged apart with one of his chaplains. His mental sufferings were very great, for he held himself responsible for the hardships and temptations to which his followers were exposed. But his Book of the Psalms had been contemptuously tossed back to him in the division of spoils, and he drew from this inexhaustible treasury stores of patience and confident calm. And the Emirs marvelled at his faith and piety in the midst of tribulation. "If the Prophet," they said, "allowed any such misfortunes to fall to our lot, we should unhesitatingly forsake his creed."

The Sultan in his turn was baffled by the unruffled dignity of the captive King, and was often heard to murmur: "Never have I met so proud a Christian." He sent skilful physicians to minister to his prisoner's wants, and so cour-

teously were their services acknowledged that Malek Moadhem sent further fifty magnificent suits from his own wardrobe. But the rags in which he was actually clothed were in Louis's eyes more seemly apparel for a King of France than the cast-off garments of the Infidel. Neither would he accept an invitation to a sumptuous banquet, where the chief grandees of the city were summoned to eat with him on equal terms and stare at him to their heart's content.

And so the Sultan, furious at this aloofness in the face of friendly overtures, threatened angrily to send him in chains to the Caliph of Bagdad, who would torture him to death in a fetid dungeon or put him to labour among his slaves. Another time he swore, with frightful imprecations, to set him in the bernicles—a species of stocks where the legs were violently stretched asunder and the small bones crushed and dislocated. "To increase the torture," adds Joinville, "after three days' respite the victim's legs, now greatly swollen, are again forced into the bernicles and cruelly broken a second time. And they tie down his head with sinews of oxen so that he has not even the relief of writhing."

At this point the Emirs intervened and insisted that the Sultan should patch up a peace

with the Christians; so finally he offered his lowest terms: Damietta and a million of gold bezants.

"A King of France cannot be ransomed in money," replied St. Louis; "if the Queen consents, the town of Damietta shall be exchanged for me, and a million of gold bezants sent for my army."

"Why need you consult the Queen?" asked the Saracens in surprise.

"She is my wife," said Louis simply.

And such was the empire which the captive's firm attitude and disinterested magnanimity had given him over his gaoler, that of his own accord the Sultan reduced the sum demanded by one-fifth.

Malek Moadhem was delighted at the prospect of regaining a port which might prove so convenient a base for a Christian army landing from the West. Louis on the other hand knew, if the Sultan did not, how poor were the city's chances in the event of a determined assault. For the Italian mariners, who formed the bulk of its defenders, were not of the same mettle as his Frenchmen. Queen Margaret lay stretched upon a bed of sickness, and the news of the disasters at Mansourah and the King's captivity added grief and nervous terror to her physical pains. Piteous is the picture that Joinville

traces of this unfortunate lady starting at intervals from her nightmare-ridden slumbers to cry out for help; for she seemed to see her room full of Saracens crowding round to kill her. A loyal old knight, eighty years of age, mounted guard at her bedside. And every time she screamed he held her hand and soothed her with the grave assurance :

“ Madam, I am with you; quit these fears.”

One night the poor Queen cast herself at his feet, imploring him to cut off her head rather than let the Saracens have her in their power. The bluff old campaigner answered soothingly :

“ Madam, rest content. I had quite made up my mind to do so without your asking.”

Next day a son was born to her whose name was John, and his surname Tristan because of the poverty and misery all around. Hardly had the little Prince made his sorrowful entrance into this world when news was brought to Margaret that the Pisans, the Genoese, and all the poorer commonalty of the town intended to sail away for Europe. She summoned the captains to her bedside and spoke to them “ in her gentle voice broken by many tears.”

“ Gentlemen, I beg of you for the love of God, do not forsake us; for well you know that if you do, it will go ill with my lord the King and all his army.” But these traders answered

sullenly they could remain no longer in a town where they were dying of hunger. The Queen promised them they should not starve, for she would buy up all the provisions in the district and feed the garrison at her own expense. On these terms they agreed to stay; and they made such a gallant show on the ramparts that, although the Infidels came right up to the walls of the town, they never ventured on an assault. Nevertheless, Margaret, before she was perfectly recovered, was forced to rise and set out by sea for the city of Acre; for word was brought her that Damietta was to be surrendered to the Egyptians.

Malek Moadhem was not alive to receive the keys. The treaty which he was arranging with St. Louis was looked upon by the veterans in his army merely as a means of getting money to squander on debauchery, and with lucrative sinecures to bestow upon his youthful favourites. The Sultana Sajareldor, to whom he owed the throne, now spread abroad the rumour that Malek Moadhem in one of his drunken bouts had slashed at the waxen tapers in his hall, wishing they were the heads of the Emirs.

And thus it came to pass that Octaï, chief of the Mamelukes, burst into the tent of the captive King, brandishing his blood-dripping scimitar.

“What will you give me,” he cried, “for

ridding you of one who was your enemy as well as ours?"

St. Louis was silent. Octaï came closer and pressed the reeking blade against the breast of the holy King.

"Make me a knight," he yelled, "or you are a dead man!"

There was no reasoning with the fanatic, but Louis did not lose his self-possession. "Get thee first made a Christian," he answered with unruffled dignity, "and then I will see about making thee a knight!"

The murderer withdrew without attempting further violence.

By order of the late Sultan, the chief nobles and great officers of the King were already embarked in four galleys to return to Damietta. About thirty of the mutineers boarded one of these galleys with drawn swords, and battle-axes hanging round their necks. The Frenchmen thought their last hour was come, and began confessing their sins one to another, according to a pious custom in the Middle Ages. Joinville, however, could no longer think of any sin or evil he had done, but only on impending death.

"I fell on my knees," he tells us, "and making the sign of the Cross exclaimed: 'Thus died St. Agnes.' Then the Constable of Cyprus,

Sir Guy d'Ebelin, knelt down beside me and made his confession, and I gave him such absolution as God was pleased to grant me power of bestowing. And after we had risen to our feet I could not remember one word he had spoken. They packed us heels and heads together in the close confined hold of the galley. All that night I lay, my feet in the face of Count Peter of Brittany and my face touching his feet."

Night brought counsel to the rebel Emirs, and on the morrow they hastened to the heroic captive, whose good opinion they could not help but value, and endeavoured to justify in his eyes the crime they had committed. With hands lifted to their turbans in respectful salute, they bowed before him almost to the ground, and told him how the tyrant just gone to his account had blasphemed Mahomet as well as Christ, and intended, as soon as Damietta was in his hands, to massacre all the Frankish captives, and to behead his chief officials or at least imprison them for life.

Not one of the mutineers dared ascend the throne left vacant by the murder of Malek Moadhem. Word was even brought to St. Louis that they were actually debating as to whether or no they should offer him the crown.

"And I should scarcely have refused it if they had," the King told Joinville. So great was his zeal for the conversion of these unbelievers.

In the end, much to the disgust of the devout disciples of Mahomet, who held that women had no souls, the Sultana Sajareldor was chosen ruler of Egypt; and the Caliph of Bagdad sent her his ironical condolences that not a single man fit to govern could be found in all her dominions. Even before her accession to power, negotiations were re-opened with the Franks—or rather the new rulers ratified the treaty already drawn up. Half the ransom was to be paid before the prisoners left the river, and the Saracens were to detain as security, till the balance was received, all the sick in Damietta as well as the war engines, armour, and salted meats.

The Emirs swore great picturesque oaths on this occasion, and they tried to make St. Louis swear in his turn that, if he did not keep the articles of the treaty, he should be reputed as one who denied his baptism and his Faith, spit on the Cross and trampled it under foot. But Louis would bind himself by no such blasphemies, though his nobles assured him the refusal would cost them all their heads.

“Rather die a good Christian,” he reminded them, “than live under the wrath of God, His Blessed Mother, and His Saints.”

Perceiving that he was not to be shaken by threats, the Emirs tried what pity might do.

They seized on the Patriarch of Jerusalem, a venerable old man of eighty, and tied his wrists so tightly to a flagstaff that his hands swelled "as big as his head," and the blood spurted forth.

"Ah! Sire, Sire!" he shrieked, unmanned by the agony, "swear boldly, and I will take the sin on my own soul."

Charles of Anjou and all the Barons present joined their entreaties to his, but Louis stood firm.

"I love you as my brother and I love myself as myself," he told Charles, "but God forbid that such words should ever sully the lips of a King of France."

Once again the Infidels were baffled by the serene majesty of the royal Saint, and the treaty was duly signed and sealed.

On Ascension Day at dawn Damietta was surrendered; and with grief and humiliation St. Louis saw the Fleur-de-Lys hauled down and the Crescent floating proudly above the ramparts. The joy of the Egyptians degenerated into brutality. Ignoring their Prophet's prohibition, they drank the wine which they found there in quantity, slaughtered the sick—although bound by treaty to protect and nurse them—and burnt the stores in such masses that the fire flamed from Friday till Sunday. The prisoners

ought to have been set free at sunrise; but they remained shut up all day without food or drink, while "the dogs of Infidels" conferred on their fate.

"Kill the King and all his great ones," urged one Emir, "and then for forty years we need not fear, for their children are young and we hold Damietta."

"We have sinned," said another, "in killing our Sultan whom the Prophet bids us guard as the apple of our eye. But let us make atonement by a virtuous act. The Koran also says: 'For the safety of thy faith kill the enemy of thy law.' Now what greater enemy hath Islam than the King of the Franks?"

However, saner counsels prevailed, and the Emirs remembered just in time that dead men paid no ransoms. So the knights were freed in the evening with some marks of respect, among which Joinville makes appreciative mention of cheese-cakes baked in the sun, and hard-boiled eggs with shells painted divers colours. On the Saturday all embarked safely: some for Acre with the King, and the rest for France, including the Count of Brittany, who was grievously sick and died three weeks later at sea. God rest his soul, he made a Christian end.

The King's brother, Alphonse of Poitou, was to remain as hostage until half the stipulated

ransom had been paid. It took the whole of Saturday and Sunday to collect and weigh the amount; and then Philip de Montfort whispered to the King that the Saracens had miscounted one scale and wronged themselves to the extent of ten thousand crowns. Louis was greatly enraged at this (he often flew into a passion, as Joinville crudely puts it, when his friends acted dishonourably) and commanded Sir Philip, on the faith he owed him as his liege-man, to see that the wrong was righted on the spot, refusing to weigh anchor for Acre till the sum guaranteed was paid to the last penny. While they were waiting, a well-dressed Mahometan came up with flowers and gifts, and pretty speeches in fluent French. He was a renegado settled comfortably in Egypt since the last Crusade, and Louis would have nothing to do with him. But Joinville took him aside for a little quiet controversy.

“ Do you not know that if you die as you are you will go straight to hell and be damned for ever ? ”

“ I know it well,” he replied with a sigh, “ but should I recant and go with you, I should suffer the pinch of poverty and be called ‘ renegado ’ all my days.”

The sea passage to Acre lasted six days—days of dull discomfort, for Louis and his suite were

still in a very weakly condition and the accommodation on board was wretched in the extreme. There was dearth of amusements too. Games of hazard were strictly forbidden among the Crusaders; but one day word was brought to the King that the Duke of Anjou was playing dice. Ill as he was he tottered to the spot and "stammering with anger" upbraided his brother for this example of levity and disregard of orders. The players were abashed, "but Sir Walter of Nemours suffered most," adds Joinville, "for he had been winning, and the King flung all the money after the tables into the sea."

Traits such as these give us glimpses of the irascible side of Louis's character—active, like all his passions, on the side of God. Outbursts of righteous indignation did not deprive Moses of the praise of the Holy Ghost as "the meekest of men." And it is just this royal virtue of meekness—this power of utilising energy under the control of reason—which strikes us in Louis at every phase of his career. We have seen him, and we shall see him again in France, "remembering God when things go well." In Egypt the heroism of his fortitude and his saintly realisation of responsible dignity served as example to his followers and as rampart against con-

tumely. And now in Palestine he is going to exhibit the gentler virtues of patience, humility and Christian love, in the land where they were first hallowed as characteristics of Our Divine Redeemer.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE HOLY LAND

THE refugees at Acre were still offering prayers for their sovereign's deliverance, when the little flotilla hove in sight, flying the Cross and the Fleur-de-Lys. All the citizens hastened to the beach, with shouts of gladness and jubilant welcome. The Queen and her ladies were there, of course, clad in robes of sombre black, and Louis had at last the joy of caressing his infant son. Then the strains of the *Te Deum* gave notice that the Legate and the clergy were advancing in solemn procession; and the soldiers of the Cross followed on, to give thanks in the principal church of the town to the God who had deemed them worthy to suffer in His holy cause.

After the hardships of the campaign and the nerve-shattering experiences of the prison, they had now to face misery in its duller and more sordid aspects. The King was the fortunate possessor of two gowns in black samite trimmed with squirrel-skins and profusely adorned with

gold buttons; but his brothers-in-arms were in rags—Joinville, in fact, reduced to a sleeveless jacket made out of the remains of the famous scarlet coverlet given him by his lady-mother. Throughout the chronicle the good Seneschal seems often without ready money, and he makes it pretty plain that he could not keep it when he was in funds. Louis relieved his need as delicately as he could. At Acre, for instance, he tells us “the King bade me, as I valued his friendship, to eat with him always, morning and evening.”

To add to their troubles a pestilence was raging in the environs; and Joinville fell grievously sick at a time when all his followers were likewise confined to bed, so that there was none to give him even the comfort of a drink. “The better to enliven me,” he notes, “I saw daily pass my window twenty corpses for burial, and the doleful chant of the *Libera* was never out of my ears.”

The outlook was indeed very dismal. There was no fighting in the immediate prospect; for of the two thousand eight hundred knights who had sailed for Egypt, scarce a hundred could be reckoned when the remnant of Louis’s army mustered at Acre. Military operations on a grand scale were in any case out of the question, for the enemy held the whole of the hill-

line of natural fortifications between the coast plain and the valley of the Jordan. Moreover the Eastern Christians whom they had come to succour were not civilised according to French ideas, and the Crusaders called them in derision "Poulains" or unbroken colts. The Papal Legate writes of the samples of such Eurasians whom they met with in these early days: "No one knows as I do the number of treacherous sinners in Acre. Their crimes call down vengeance from Heaven—till God wipe the city off the face of the earth, having first soaked its streets in the blood of its inhabitants."

Altogether it is not surprising that when St. Louis took the votes of his comrades, all but three were in favour of an immediate return to Europe, at least to collect men and money for a second expedition. Each of the hundred had to express his opinion in his turn. The Count of Jaffa was loath to do so, for his castles in Palestine made his interests coincide with his convictions, but after some pressing he asserted that if the King could keep the field it would redound more to his honour to remain than thus discomfited to return. Joinville spoke in the same sense, basing his plea on the parting advice of his kinsman the old Lord of Bollencourt:

" You are going overseas. That is well, but be careful how you come home. No knight,

be he rich or poor, can return without disgrace if he leaves in the hands of the Infidel the poor folk who have trusted in him."

And so the Seneschal advised the King to stay on and offer high pay to the Greeks and other Christians of the East, if they would enlist under his banner and aid him to break the chains of the poor prisoners who had "been captured in the service of God, and will never be freed if the King forsakes them now."

At these words many of the knights in the Council shed tears; for there was scarcely one but had some kinsman in the hands of the Saracen. Two more votes were recorded against the return, and the speeches which accounted for them proved very clearly that reason and honour were on the side of the minority. Some of the great ones on the other side were reduced to bolster up a bad cause by dint of personal invective. At this point Louis intervened with words of grave rebuke.

"All those whom I call to my Councils," he said, "must have patience to listen; and for each one it is a duty to speak. This day week, my Lords, I will tell you what course I have decided to adopt."

Poor Joinville had a bad time of it when the meeting broke up. He was sneered at as the champion of the despised "Poulains";—nay,

some went so far as to call him a Poulain himself.

"I'd rather be a Poulain than a recreant such as ye," he retorted jauntily, and the jest struck home; for in the language of chivalry "I own myself recreant," was held to mean in a tournament "I am thoroughly exhausted and give up the fight."

But for all his bold front the Seneschal felt sad at heart. He knew not if his outspoken frankness had displeased the King, and during the dinner that ensued St. Louis neither spoke to him nor looked his way. So when grace was said he withdrew to a grated window and looked gloomily out on the ships in the harbour, repeating to himself :

"If the King goes back to France, I shall take service with my cousin the Prince of Antioch."

And soon he felt a hand grasp his shoulder and another playfully cover his eyes.

"Leave me alone, Sir Philip," he exclaimed, twisting petulantly away. "You have worried me enough to-day."

But the hand slid along his face, and he knew it was the King's by the feel of the emerald on his finger.

"Don't move," whispered Louis, "but tell me this. How comes it that you, so young a

knight, have dared set your opinion against the rest of the Council?"

"Sire, it were disloyal to have spoken otherwise!"

"So you still think it would be wrong of me to go home?"

"Fore God, Sire, I do!"

"And if I remain, Seneschal, will you stay with me?"

"Yea, that will I, Sire, at my own or at your expense."

"Well, be of good cheer," continued Louis. "Your advice was after my own heart. But say nothing of this for a week."

On the following Sunday the Council met again; and Louis began by the Sign of the Cross and a prayer to the Holy Ghost, remarking that his mother had taught him to do so always before making an important speech.

"My mother," he went on, "has many men-at-arms to defend France; but there are few to care for the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and so I have resolved to remain on here for the present. I will share what I have with those of you who elect to keep me company; in fact, I shall pay you so well that it will be your fault and not mine if you do not stay. But every one is free to depart and I shall say naught but 'God speed.' "

Joinville was among the few who closed with the offer; and the King, finding reasonable his rough estimate of expenses, paid what he asked in advance up to Easter. By Easter the good Seneschal's finances were on a more stable footing, or perhaps he had gained wisdom, and preferred trusting the King's generosity to driving with him a money bargain. At any rate he offered other terms, which we give in his own breezy words :

“ The King was to promise never to fly into a passion for anything I should say to him (which was often the case) and I, on my part, engaged to keep my temper whenever he refused my requests.”

Louis's ringing laugh was good to hear. Forthwith he led Joinville by the hand to ratify the contract in presence of the Legate and the Council. “ All were joyous and told me I should be the richest man in the camp,” says Joinville, “ and so I stayed on.”

The whole account is delightfully illustrative of St. Louis's open-hearted delicacy in dealing with his knights. Well might he grapple to his heart the friends who remained faithful to him in his tribulation; for it was keen sorrow to his sensitive affections to see how eagerly even his own brothers hurried over their preparations as soon as leave was given to set sail for France.

And yet he had no words of reproach for them or for any of their companions, and entrusted to their care an open letter addressed to his clergy, nobles and people. Herein he related simply the vicissitudes of the Crusade—victories, defeats, illnesses and captivity—and besought their aid to help their fellow-Christians in the East “whose trust was in God and in France.” The letter ended by a request for prayers “to obtain from the Divine Mercy the happy issue which has hitherto been hindered by our sins.”

But offers of assistance were to come from a most unlikely quarter. The Sultan of Aleppo invited the French monarch to join him in a punitive expedition against Egypt, to avenge the murder of his kinsman, Malek Moadhem. He proposed to give a fair share of the spoils to Louis's army, and to Louis himself the kingdom of Jerusalem, which was then actually under the dominion of Egypt. The offer was a tempting one, but Louis was in no hurry to accept. Certainly no man had better reason to complain of the heads of the Egyptian Government. He had kept to the letter his part of the treaty, and in the brief interval since his arrival at Acre despatched to them the second half of the indemnity agreed upon. But they had been less loyal to their plighted word. Even before the King's galleys had set sail from the harbour

of Damietta, as we have seen, they had destroyed the stores and murdered the sick left behind as hostages. Even when the stipulated ransom had been paid to them full weight, the French Ambassadors only succeeded in bringing back to Palestine four hundred of the wretched Christians who languished in bonds in the different provinces of Egypt.

Yet before accepting the alliance proposed by Aleppo, he made another attempt to give the disloyal Emirs a chance to be honest. Sir John de Valence was despatched to Cairo to offer peace or war; and so fearful were the Emirs of the possible co-operation of the Franks with their other enemies in Asia Minor, that they agreed to all his demands, and sent back their Christian prisoners, as well as the baptised children who were being bred in the religion of Mahomet. The Ambassador also brought to Acre the skulls which had been bleaching on the walls of Cairo since the last Crusade, together with the bones of Count Walter de Brienne, that all might be buried in consecrated ground.

Among the captives liberated, Joinville picked out forty knights of his acquaintance, in a very ragged and squalid condition. He clothed them in coats of green at his own expense and presented them to the King as likely recruits. The Council, of course, sneered at the sickly contingent;

but Louis only remembered they had suffered for Christ. The kind-hearted Seneschal found them very troublesome in camp : he was continually mixed up in their private quarrels and ingenious in providing for them better equipment. But they worked wonders under his command when real fighting had to be done. For though the Emirs kept troth with the French as long as the Sultan of Aleppo had twenty thousand men in the field, they showed themselves less friendly when fortune favoured their arms; and as time went on, and no more warriors arrived from France, they took active measures to win back the towns of Palestine, and among other atrocities massacred the inhabitants of Sidon.

Louis was seldom in battle himself. His chief military work in Palestine was to put the towns in a state of defence. But on one occasion at least he accompanied his army on the march. And there in the stony desert, under the pitiless glare of a scorching sun, they came across a hideous, ghastly sight—the dead bodies, stripped and blood-smeared, of two thousand Christians who had been slain by the Saracens some days previously. The holy King at once ordered a halt; and while the Papal Legate, who rode in his company, consecrated a cemetery hastily marked out, the soldiers received orders

to dig graves and decently inter the remains of their murdered brothers in the Faith. Such a command was received with repugnance: murmurs broke out, and in sundry instances obedience was refused. Then King Louis leapt from his horse and lifted in his arms a putrid corpse.

"Come, my friends," he cried, "you will not refuse a little earth to these martyrs of Jesus Christ."

Nerved by his example, the men laboured with a will at the work of mercy, which lasted nearly a week. The good King was the only member of the party who betrayed no symptoms of disgust, for the stench was so intense that the Legate died from its effects a few days later.

The hardships of a campaign were hailed as a relief from the weary monotony of military routine. Inaction is dangerous as well as irksome to all soldiers, especially French ones, and Louis had to make very stringent regulations lest there should be a repetition of the excesses which had disgraced his army both at Cyprus and at Damietta.

"Sin becomes more heinous," he told his men, "when committed in this hallowed region. Here every hamlet and mountain recalls some incident in the Life of Our Blessed Redeemer, and His sacred feet have trodden the very ground on which we stand."

He encouraged, as far as he could, pious pilgrimages to the Holy Places, and himself prayed long hours at Cana, at Nazareth, and on the Mount of the Transfiguration. Fain would he have poured forth his heart to God in the city made sacred by Our Saviour's Sufferings and Crucifixion; but although the Sultan of Aleppo cordially and repeatedly offered him safe-conduct, St. Louis agreed with his Barons and Bishops that it was unbecoming in a Crusader-King to enter Jerusalem otherwise than as its deliverer.

Bethlehem too remained unvisited, because outside the sphere of his military operations; but he spent a delightful day at Nazareth on the Feast of the Annunciation 1251. The holy King alighted from his horse as the long white town came into view; and, fasting and wearing a hair-shirt, he "walked prayerfully" through its streets and down the steps, tunnelled in the living rock, which led to the crypt beneath the great Basilica. Here in the very room where Our Blessed Lady received the embassy of the Angel Gabriel, he received Holy Communion, while his eyes swam in tears and his heart overflowed with heavenly joy.

Moments such as these must have refreshed and invigorated St. Louis amid the monotonous drudgery of daily routine. These weary years in Palestine, viewed in the retrospect, add

peculiar heroism to his yearnings for a second Crusade; and who shall say if their memory did not come back to brighten the loneliness of his death-bed on the Barbary coast? It was the period when he had less of his own way than at any other time of his life; and the Saints, more than other men, have a right to love their own way, for have they not taken special pains to ensure its conformity to the ways of God? He had more to suffer, it is true, in Egypt, but there was glory there and the excitement of uncertainty: no middle course was possible between heroic constancy and grievous sin; and tired nature could always buoy itself with the proximate possibility of the martyr's crown. In Palestine, on the other hand, his soul was hourly fretted by the timorous inertia and pettiness of the *Poulains* whom he had come to protect, and he had moreover to endure the patronising friendliness of the Mahometan Princes with whom he had to treat on their behalf.

Yet God had work for him here to do—no brilliant achievements indeed, but solid good, consciously or unconsciously—in the line of duty.

One great fruit of this prolonged sojourn was the altered demeanour towards our holy religion of those Eastern potentates who came under the influence of his virtues and chivalry. The

Sultan of Aleppo was not the only ruler in Syria to court his alliance. The Old Man of the Mountains sent envoys, at first with knives and winding-sheet and threats, and a second time with fair words and quaint and costly gifts: among the rest a shirt which he himself had worn, in token of the close alliance which he wished to contract with the King of the Franks, and a ring of pure gold with his name engraved thereon to keep Louis in mind "that henceforth ye be as dear to me as one of the fingers of my hand."

Not to be outdone in courtesy, the King sent to the Mountain-Sheik scarlet robes, and gold and silver plate, by Yves le Breton, a Dominican Friar, who spoke Arabic well. Brother Yves brought back word that there was scant hope of the Sheik's conversion, though he had a great devotion to St. Peter and kept under his pillow a small book containing extracts from the Gospels.

This episode is but one instance of St. Louis's solicitude for the conversion of the Saracens. In theory, he left controversy to the clergy. "A layman," he told Joinville, "should not argue with unbelievers, but thrust his sword into their bodies as far as he is able." Yet his practice was more in harmony with the spirit of the Gospel. We find him instructing adults for

Baptism, sending convert children to receive a convent-education in France, and issuing decrees that repentant renegades were not to be reviled, but everywhere treated "with fine reserve and noble reticence," in the bonds of Christian brotherhood.

He was angry, we have seen, in the Delta of the Nile when Templars and Hospitallers talked of alliance with the Infidels; but, after a course of lessons in the school of failure, he was thankful in Palestine for any chance of bettering the condition of the wretched *Poulains*; and so he made what interest he could to secure for them improved treatment at the hands of the different Sultans and Sheiks.

And he did not despair of one day coming back to rescue the Holy City from the grasp of Islam. This is why he took special pains with the defences of the three great ports of Palestine : Acre, Sidon and Jaffa. At Sidon he might himself be seen among the workmen, handling pick-axe or trowel as occasion required. It was at Sidon in the spring of 1253 that tidings reached him of his mother's death.

CHAPTER XIII

HOME FROM THE WAR

WHENEVER his knights murmured at the tardy supplies received from Europe, St. Louis made answer with filial confidence :

“ My mother will never forsake us, for our cause is that of Christ.”

The Queen Regent could indeed ill spare the soldiers and money which from time to time she contrived to send to the East. She had much ado to maintain order in France, although of the turbulent nobles who bred trouble during her son’s minority, Theobald of Champagne was now experiencing in his turn the thorns of kingship in Navarre, and Hugh de la Marche and Peter Mauclerk had nobly atoned for the past by their gallant death as soldiers of the Cross. There was a disputed succession to the earldom of Flanders : one candidate was supported by the Emperor, while the other—a Dampierre de Bourbon—naturally relied on the protection of France. The English King too was making abortive attempts to regain his lost

territories. Then Prince Alphonse inherited the fiefs of Toulouse on the death of his father-in-law, and the great trade centres of the south needed firmness as well as conciliation in their method of government. In Paris itself the University, with its cosmopolite constitution and quasi-ecclesiastical privileges, was again at loggerheads with the City, and turbulent riots necessitated an appeal to the Pope for a decree ordaining that any student bearing arms should be amenable to the common law.

But the greatest trouble of this second Regency came from the Pastoureaux. When the news of the King's captivity reached his realm a horde of fanatics made it the pretext for a formidable insurrection under the leadership of the mysterious "Grand Master of Hungary," who claimed to hold in his right hand (clenched from birth through natural deformity) a mandate from the Queen of Heaven to work miracles and redress abuses. The sins of France, he proclaimed boldly, kept back God's blessing from the arms of the Crusaders. And so his followers—simple rustics for the most part—armed themselves with staves, sheep-crooks, sickles and scythes, and with the Lamb of God on their banners passed from town to town pillaging and slaughtering as they went. Priests and religious were in a special manner marked out as their

victims, and these “Followers of the Lamb” claimed the right of themselves administering all the Sacraments of Holy Church. But the trainbands of the Communes rallied round the Regent in this crisis, and the Paris students were allowed for the nonce the use of swords. And so the rising was at length quelled, and victory ensured to the royal arms.

But Blanche was worn out with grief and anxiety, and none of her surviving sons was in a position to afford her effectual help. Alphonse, on whose cool judgment she had learnt to rely, was stricken down with palsy and threatened with blindness. Charles was making trouble in the north by his ambitious interference in the concerns of Flanders. And when Blanche realised that Louis, her best beloved, was not to be shaken in his resolve to remain overseas, disappointment brought on a series of fainting fits, and it became clear to herself and to those around her that her health was completely shattered and the end of her life very near.

Bracing her will with queenly fortitude to meet the King of Terrors in a truly Christian spirit, she had herself clothed in the white woollen habit of the Cistercians and laid upon a low pallet of straw. And, so prepared, she received all the rites and consolations which the Church has appointed to comfort and strengthen

her dying children. The last five days of her life passed in prayerful agony. "Veni Creator Spiritus" was often on her lips, the invocation which had brought her solace and light amid the lonely perplexities of her widowhood. At last she lay speechless and seemingly unconscious. But when those around her began the prayers for the dying she was distinctly heard to murmur between her clenched teeth "Hasten to help me, Saints of God!"

Blanche died on November 27, 1252, in her sixty-fifth year. She lives in history as the Queen who made peace and kept peace and, by her unaided genius, preserved the crown of France for her son. "The people mourned for her death," says the Chronicle of St. Denis, "for she would have had them all rich, and she was strictly just."

Late in the following spring the Papal Legate in Palestine brought the sad tidings to Louis, who was then at Sidon, "enclosing the city with high walls and tall towers, and seeing that the ditches were well cleaned within and without." He guessed at once that something was seriously amiss, and before one word could be spoken made signs to the Legate and his confessor, Geoffrey de Beaulieu, to follow him into his private oratory, where they knelt a few moments in silent prayer. Then said the Legate :

"Thank God, Sire, for having given you a mother who watched over you and your kingdom with such sagacious prudence. He has now seen fit to recall her to Himself."

A great cry burst from Louis and then a torrent of tears. But he was too well trained in the school of adversity to lose for long the precious merit of resignation. Kneeling on the altar-step he prayed aloud :

"My God, be Thou blessed for lending me so long a time Madame my mother—a mother so worthy of my love and whom I loved above all other mortals. My God, be Thou likewise blessed for having called her to Thyself by bodily death. May Thy Holy Name be praised for ever and ever."

He shut himself up alone with his confessor to give free vent to his grief and to recite the Office of the Dead. "As far as I can remember," says Geoffrey de Beaulieu, "he made not a single mistake in any of the psalms or lessons, a marvel indeed, seeing that his heart was overwhelmed by such sudden and grievous news. Henceforth to the end of his life he assisted daily at a special Mass said for the everlasting repose of his mother's soul."

For two days no one dared intrude upon the privacy of the King. Then he sent for Joinville.

"Ha, Seneschal," he cried, stretching out his arms, "I have lost my mother."

And Joinville thought the moment well chosen to rate him "that he so outrageously grieved," and to remind him, on Solomon's authority, that a valiant man should not show on his countenance the grief he bears in his heart, lest he thereby cause joy to his enemies and sorrow to his friends.

He goes on to tell us of the solemn requiem services which Louis caused to be celebrated in the country where he then was, and of the cargo of jewels he shipped to France, with letters to the churches and religious communities entreating prayers for himself and for the soul of his lady-mother.

The whole tone of the narrative shows that Joinville himself did not "grieve outrageously" for the death of Blanche, which made the King's return to France an imperative duty. Even the Barons of Palestine acknowledged that his stay in the East would bring but little profit to the kingdom of Jerusalem, and they were cheered by his promise to return with a mighty armament. But a full year elapsed before his little fleet set sail from Acre on April 25, 1254. "You may well call this your birthday," Joinville reminded him, "for your escape from this pestilential region is truly the beginning of another life."

We are indebted to the good Seneschal for many interesting details of the homeward voyage; for he travelled in the King's ship, a huge *dromond* with eight hundred souls aboard. The soldiers and sailors had very cramped quarters in the *Paradisum* amidships, but the élite of the passengers were very comfortable in the spacious upper deck and in the turrets fore and aft. In one of these turrets Queen Margaret was lodged with the royal nursery, for three children had been born to her during the Crusade—John Tristan, Peter, and Blanche. In the top storey were some nuns who replaced one another night and day before the Tabernacle; for the Legate had given leave for the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved on board, and a chapel was fitted up in one of the cabins of this same turret,—literally the forecastle of the ship.

These nuns helped too in looking after the Saracen converts whose religious instruction was otherwise well ensured, for Louis and his chaplains gave them private exhortations, and moreover all the passengers were obliged to listen to three sermons in the week. There were special discourses also for the benefit of the crew whenever the sea was calm, “and more sailors were confessed than ever before.” St. Louis moved much among the mariners, reminding them, in familiar intercourse, of the risk they ran of

sudden death, living as they did amid daily perils from the sea. He told the captain :

“ Rather than have a man interrupted in the discharge of his religious duties I will gladly haul ropes in his stead.”

He could speak from experience of the dangers of the deep, for off Cyprus the vessel ran aground in a dense fog and a portion of the keel was carried away.

“ Madam,” cried the terrified attendants, “ shall we waken the children?”

“ No,” replied Margaret, “ let them go to their God sleeping.”

The King was equally calm. The officers of the ship implored him to remove into a more seaworthy vessel.

“ On your faith, and the loyalty you owe me,” he made answer, “ tell me this. If this vessel were filled with costly merchandise, would you forsake it?”

They answered emphatically that they would not. “ But your life and ours, Sire, are on a different plane, and we will never advise you to run such a risk.”

“ Now listen,” rejoined Louis quietly. “ There are five hundred passengers aboard, each of whom loves his life as much as I do mine. They will leave the ship if I do, and perhaps have to spend the rest of their lives in

Cyprus, waiting vainly for a vessel to take them home. For their sakes I think it well to trust my person and my wife and children into the safe keeping of the good Providence of God."

And so there was a halt in harbour, while the sailors tightened the gaping seams and repaired the damage as best they could.

In this leaky vessel they had soon to weather a violent storm. So terrified was the Queen that she united with Joinville in a vow to St. Nicholas, the protector of travellers by sea. The knight was to make a pilgrimage barefoot to the Saint's shrine at Varengeville and deposit there, in Margaret's name, a silver ship with ropes in silver thread and figures of the royal family then aboard.

For all her terror Queen Margaret remembered that her husband's consent was necessary before she could undertake a vow, and that he would certainly not allow her to fulfil one made without his knowledge. Her remark to this effect is one of the weighty trifles on which writers of our own day base their theory that she and Louis did not always live in harmony.

The King spent that night of peril on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament. The tempest brought home to him vividly the sense of man's helplessness and utter dependence upon the power and goodwill of his Creator. On the

morrow he spoke seriously on the duty of gratitude and the necessity to live always in the friendship of our Mighty God, who thus threatens, he told Joinville, "not to increase His own profit or hinder His own damage, but out of His great love for us, that so we may enter into ourselves and oust from our hearts the things that we know displease Him therein."

There were other mishaps to vary the monotony of the voyage—peril from fire, when the Queen's prompt presence of mind saved their vessel from destruction; peril too from false brethren when Louis showed himself "a King to be feared because of his justice."

The children, and perhaps their elders, were tired of the sameness in the food, and at Margaret's entreaty a galley was sent ahead to purchase fruit and fresh vegetables at Pantellaria, an island off the coast of Tunis. But the messengers found the conditions ashore so pleasant that they did not hurry back; and the King's ship cruised in the offing for a full week, in ignorance and anxiety as to their fate. The mariners were loath to shorten sail in such dangerous waters, but Louis would not hear of leaving his men unrescued or at least unavenged. However when the prodigals did return they found no fatted calf to do them honour. They were not even allowed on board, but com-

elled to finish the voyage in a tiny skiff, which tossed on the waves in the wake of the *dromond*. In vain did they howl for mercy, as the sea dashed over them, or the connecting cable threatened to snap under stress of wind.

July was well advanced when the little flotilla rode at anchor beneath the walls of Hyères in the land of Provence; for the uncertain weather, and the difficulties of navigation in the Rhone Delta, made it impossible to reach the King's harbour at Aigues-Mortes. Louis was in a very weakly condition and rest was imperative before he could proceed to Paris to deposit the oriflamme on the tomb of St. Denis. But ill as he was, he contrived while in the south to make a pilgrimage to the Sainte Baume for the feast-day of St. Mary Magdalen. At Hyères, too, certain of his subjects found means to secure the privilege of a personal audience. The abbot of Cluny, for instance, travelled thither on business of his Order, and sent before him as a gift a pair of valuable horses—one for the King, the other for the Queen. At the interview the King showed himself most graciously attentive; but hardly had the Abbot departed when in came Joinville with the homely frankness which Louis liked in those about him, though he never suffered it to degenerate into undue familiarity.

“Is it not true, Sire, that you listened so

long to the Abbot for the sake of the fine horses he sent you?"

"Even so," admitted the King.

"Then, Sire, on your return to France, it would be well to put all your Magistrates on their oath never to receive the smallest present from those who have business to transact in your courts. For be assured that, if they accept aught, they will listen longer and with greater good-will."

It speaks well for Louis's choice of Councillors that the little group who had accompanied him from the Holy Land all applauded this remark as sound advice.

The Abbot of Cluny was by no means the sole ecclesiastic who hurried to welcome home the much-loved monarch. There was a very holy Franciscan then at Hyères whom Louis sent for to preach before the court, and the worthy friar took care to suit his matter to the needs of his audience. He began by expressing his pained surprise at seeing before him so many priests and religious. "A monk out of his cloister," said he, "is in as great danger of mortal sin as a fish is of death when it lies gasping on the bank." Then he turned to the King. "I have searched the Scriptures," he told him, "and the best works of the Ancients, but never have I found that nations have thrust out their

rulers unless these had first corrupted justice and dealt it out unfairly. Now then, let the King take heed to give his people good and speedy justice, that so Our Lord may suffer him to enjoy his kingdom and preserve it in peace and tranquillity all the days of his life."

No trace in this discourse—nor indeed anywhere else in those honest old days—of the post-Renaissance theory, "The Right Divine of Kings to govern wrong." There was another friar among Louis's friends—Brother Thomas of Aquin to wit—who but voiced the views of his century and of Catholic doctrine in his celebrated axiom "Rex propter Regnum, sed non Regnum propter Regem"—The King is for the sake of the kingdom, not the kingdom for the sake of the King.

Louis stood in scant need of the Franciscan's advice. "The Saints," says Bourdaloue, "made their perfection consist in the exact fulfilment of their duty. St. Louis was a great King because he strove to be a great Saint. He became a great Saint because he strove to be a good King."

CHAPTER XIV

“ REX PROPTER REGNUM ”

—*S. T. Aquinas.*

“WE wish most heartily the peace and better security of our subjects, in whose safety we ourselves have rest. Great is our anger, therefore, against those who do them mischief.”

These are St. Louis's own words in an Ordinance “On the Duty of Regal Power” which he issued to his bailiffs in 1254, the very year of his return from Palestine. The King's fiefs, each under the care of its own provost or seneschal, were so scattered throughout the realm that Philip Augustus had deemed it advisable to divide up the country into bailliwick for the more effective superintendence of the Crown officials and to act as a check upon the local Baronage. Louis raised the number of bailliwick to twenty-two, and his bailiffs had to swear that they would do justice alike to great and small; and that while upholding the just claims of the King they would never encroach upon the rights of individuals. *Joinville's*

sound advice as to gifts was incorporated in the form of oath.

The men considered worthy of this responsible position had to buy their offices, according to a custom prevalent in France then and in later generations. This was considered the reverse of a drawback in the thirteenth century, when every man served his country gratis as a matter of course, albeit we find knights of the shire elected to our English House of Commons heavily fined for non-acceptance of the duties thrust upon them. It secured the appointment of men "with a stake in the country." Probably too these bailliwick had attached to them certain emoluments amounting to a living wage. From another point of view the purchase-money may be looked upon as a tax on magisterial dignity, or the price of a rather expensive Government stamp.

In the days of Philip Augustus the royal bailiffs were free to re-sell their office—in other words to nominate their successor; but the Ordinance of 1254 deprived them of this privilege. For St. Louis was most particular to select himself as his delegates "men loyal, wise and upright, who could hold the scales of justice so nicely balanced that the weak as well as the strong might benefit in its even distribution." They came into power with clean hands; and

detailed rules of conduct removed even temptations to any abuse of their position. They might not while in office borrow any sum above twenty pounds, nor remain in debt eight weeks. The King's formal sanction was required if they bought land or married their children within the boundaries of their jurisdiction. Finally—and this rule applied as well to inferior delegates of the Crown: seneschals, viscounts, mayors, etc.—they had to remain forty days in the neighbourhood when their tenure of office had expired, to answer any complaint lodged against them at the bar of their successors. But if bailiffs and seneschals behaved well while in office, Louis retained them as his friends and advisers.

Besides defining the powers and duties of these permanent officials, St. Louis established Inquisitors, on the model of the English Justices in Eyre, to make the circuit of the provinces "to bear hope to every hovel and bring back truth to the King." Nor was he content with sending seneschals as a check on barons, bailiffs as a check on seneschals, and inquisitors as a check on bailiffs. Frequent were the royal progresses throughout the land to see that all was well and to spread his charities further afield. He travelled of course with a numerous retinue, and he kept a vigilant watch over their behaviour. When he lodged, for instance, as

he usually did, in some Monastery or Abbey, he insisted on his arrival that the keys of cellar and larder be delivered immediately into his own safe-keeping.

Joinville traces for us a charming picture of his easiness of access at home, and zeal for the right administration of the laws. "Many a summer morning," he writes, "when Mass was over, did this holy King go with us for a stroll in the Forest of Vincennes, and after a while seat himself in our midst at the foot of an oak. Then any one who wished to speak with him drew nigh without ceremony or hindrance from the ushers."

"Any disputes?" he would ask affably, and if there were he would call upon two of his skilled Bailiffs to try the cases in his presence. Sometimes he put in a word or two to help out an inexperienced pleader; and sometimes too, when the clamour became uproarious, he would look round smiling with the gentle reminder :

"One at a time, my friends! You will each be heard in your turn."

On his death-bed he exhorted his son to relieve and favour the poor as much as possible, to be bountiful, courteous, and compassionate in their regard. "In the administration of justice," he added, "be upright and severe, but hear patiently the complaints of the poor. . . . When your own

interests are in the balance, be on their side until you know the truth.”

Such was his own rule of conduct, whether at the Oak of Vincennes or in the gardens of the Louvre, where he dealt justice in the same informal manner “clad in camlet and black taffety with white peacock’s feathers in the cap on his flowing well-brushed hair,” with his courtiers sitting round him, on carpets which he had thoughtfully had spread for their accommodation. Once word reached him that a poor knight had been thrown into prison for daring to appeal “to the justice of the King” when judgment was given against him in favour of the Count of Anjou. As we do not hold the story from Joinville, no graphic impressions of Louis’s wrath have come down to us, only his scathing rebuke to Charles when summoning him to Paris to answer the charge :

“There must be only one King in France. Do not think that because you are my brother I will side with you against truth and justice.”

The poor knight could find no lawyer willing to take up his case against a Prince of the Blood; so Louis selected one among the ablest of his own Councillors and made him swear to do his utmost on his client’s behalf. So well was the oath kept that the Count of Anjou had to repair the injury in full.

In this reign a change came over the constitution and functions of the French Parliament. It no longer met at uncertain intervals and wherever the King happened to be, but was regularly convoked three times a year at Paris; and as its chief business became more and more restricted to the righting of individual grievances, the importance of the Crown lawyers increased, while the attendance of the feudal lords (save when it was question of their own interests) just as naturally declined. And thus, with the lapse of centuries, the Paris Parliament became as a legislative factor merely "a court to register the King's decrees."

In truth St. Louis's actions gave his Barons no handle for criticism. "They feared him because he was just" is the suggestive comment of William de Nangis; and their feudal ideas received a severe shock when this justice blended with clemency, as in the following instance of his mild interpretation of the game-laws.

Three young Flemings, sent to learn French in the Abbey of St. Nicholas, were caught shooting rabbits in the de Coucy woods, and hanged on the spot by order of the Sire Enguerrand—grandson of Louis's former competitor for the throne. The haughty young lord attempted to carry things with a high hand, when at last he condescended to appear before the Parliament

convened to pass judgment on the deed. At one stage of the proceedings he expressed the wish to retire in order to consult his kinsfolk on his defence, and nearly all the Barons rose from their seats and followed him out of the hall, for all were allied to him by birth or marriage. They advised him to prove his innocence in single combat, but Louis would have none of such obsolescent procedure; and when sworn witnesses had proved the truth of the charge, the Barons were commanded to find a true verdict. Their sole reply was to fall on their knees entreating the King for mercy.

“More mercy than he showed the poor Flemish children,” said Louis gravely. “I do not hang my nobles, nor do I wish to refuse the guilty time to do penance. But you yourselves shall deliberate on the form of expiation.”

And the Sire de Coucy was condemned to lose his rights of feudal jurisdiction, to serve three years in Palestine at his own expense, to build and endow two monasteries and several hospitals, besides three chantries in which Mass should be said in perpetuity for the souls of his victims. It is interesting to add that the schoolmasters of the lads were considered entitled to compensation, so the forest in which the rabbits were shot was made over in fee simple to the Abbey of St. Nicholas.

Fain would Enguerrand de Coucy, and many another whose might was right, uphold their evil doings in the lists of chivalry every time their oppressive tactics were called in question. But the King always insisted on the regular forms of law. He employed experts in jurisprudence to collate the *Capitularies* of Charlemagne with the old Roman decrees as embodied in the Code of the Emperor Justinian; and before starting on his second Crusade he had the satisfaction of knowing that the administration of justice in his realm was already reduced to system. When we consider the imperial models upon which they worked, and the feudal opposition which they met on every side in the discharge of their functions, it is not surprising that these lawyers completely transformed the mediæval notion of kingship which had hitherto prevailed in France, and that they vested quasi-absolute powers in the Crown.

The royal supremacy thus evolved was safe in the hands of St. Louis; but the pity of it was that the inheritors of his sceptre had not each his holiness and his ability, and that in dark days to come weaklings and egotists could claim to be "the State," while the nobles had all the privileges and none of the responsibilities of the ruling class. And so it came to pass that the Conciergerie, which Saint Louis built near the

hall where his lawyers worked out their despotic schemes, had its grim part to play in the brief halt before the scaffold of another Louis in the sinister era of the Great Revolution.

The lawyers' task was not completed until the close of the reign, and meanwhile there were reforms which could not wait. So from time to time the King issued his *Establishments*—brief codes of laws to suit the requirements of the times, and similar in character and origin to the “*Assizes*” of Henry II of England. They were edicts drawn up in concert with his Council; but, as Joinville is careful to tell us, “St. Louis was considered as by far the wisest of his advisers, and whenever aught demanded immediate attention he never waited for the opinion of his Council, but gave a speedy and decided answer.”

Certainly his *Establishments* bear the stamp of practical common sense and care for the interests of God's poor. They are in every respect worthy of the man who aimed at being the most fervent Christian in his realm, and who never tired of repeating :

“The King is the minister of God for good.”

Private wars—that scourge of the age—are absolutely forbidden on the King's lands. Elsewhere, forty days are bound to elapse between the challenge and the actual fighting, and

stringent penalties are to be enforced against any belligerents who "unduly disturb the plough."

Messengers on the King's business—and historians date the regular system of posts in France from this reign—are instructed to hire no horse needed for tillage, unless in case of dire necessity, and even then to borrow by preference from the stables of the well-to-do.

Another decree insists that the peasants be not merely encouraged but compelled to cultivate leeks and pot-herbs in their little plots of ground. And soon every hut in France enjoyed the wholesome luxury of its own little *pot-au-feu*.

The powers of the Barons, in meting out justice on their manors, were so curtailed that it became possible to restrict likewise the privilege of sanctuary. What need was there now for the accused to seek even temporary shelter "at the horns of the altar" when not passion or interest, but deliberate zeal for a well-defined law was to guide his judges in their formal verdict? The interests of widows and orphans were further safeguarded by transferring all disputes affecting bequests to the ecclesiastical courts. For, while the landowner was the natural heir of his serfs, he was only feudally entitled to the "dead hand" of the freeman working on his estate, and his greed was no longer to determine the amount and quality of the household gear by

which the family of the deceased might buy exemption from payment of the gruesome legacy.

Main morte—in the literal meaning—was even before St. Louis's day a custom more often honoured in the breach than in the observance, so he had not to waste energy in legislating against it. Neither did he emancipate all the serfs in his dominions with one stroke of his pen, although he heartily agreed with his brother Alphonse that every man had a natural right to his liberty. The serfs, as a class, were by no means the down-trodden slaves they have been represented. They were not mere chattels to be bought and sold at the whim of their masters. Rather were they considered as attached to the land which they cultivated, and liable to change owners with it. They might not marry off the estate without the consent of their lord, and any "portable property" they might accumulate became his at their death. Otherwise they lived more or less happy and contented in their huts, having food and raiment for their families in return for their labour, and exempt from the feudal burdens which weighed at times so heavily on the freemen who worked on the same estate. Moreover the serf might acquire money, though he might not bequeath it, and in this way buy his freedom if he thought it worth while. He was not compelled to military service, and the

mere fact of fighting as a volunteer in the King's wars or in the Crusade raised him at once to the rank of *roturier*.

The *roturiers* (from the Low-Latin *ruptuarii*, or clodbreakers) tilled the fields of the lord of the manor on one or three days every week, and had *corvées*—or unpaid labour—on his account to fill up more or less of their free time. They were liable to forty days' military service during his wars, and to levies on the products of their industry in time of peace. The *roturiers* in each manor could, and usually did, combine to form a joint-stock company legally recognised as a Commune—empowered to settle their own disputes, to arrange for a fair adjustment of *corvées*, and to hold corn, cattle, ploughs, etc., in common for the use of its members. Between royal bailiffs and properly organised communes, agricultural labourers had little to fear from the caprices of the landlord.

St. Louis was the first King of France who allowed *roturiers*—as individuals—to purchase land; and there was much land in the market in connection with his Crusades. He now confirmed this privilege, and further enacted that land of a certain value, thus acquired, entitled its holder in the third generation to coat armour and letters of nobility. On the eve of the

French Revolution it was estimated that two-thirds of the seventy thousand fiefs of France were held by *roturier* tenure.

From the reign of Louis VI the Communes—as corporate bodies—had enjoyed the privilege of buying from the lord of the manor exemption from feudal obligations in the shape of a charter constituting them into a self-governing town. The *roturiers* in this case became burghers, and under St. Louis a further payment was all that was needed to make them "King's burghers," directly dependent on the Crown. Many inconvenient local customs were abolished by royal decree; and such ease and security were afforded to trade and industry and the transfer of capital, that a burgher came to be defined by Victor Hugo as "a man with leisure to sit." The King did not interfere with the great lords' right of coinage, but his own money soon superseded theirs as it was good metal and good weight and accepted everywhere as the currency of the realm. All the coins of St. Louis now in existence are pierced, for after his death they were worn as holy medals. Those struck after his captivity can be recognised by the fetters in the design; for he was proud of the badge of Christ which he had been esteemed worthy to wear in Egypt.

The towns were usually empowered by charter to elect their own governing body, but it was

seldom they availed themselves of this right—so seldom indeed that the method was known as “Election by inspiration of the Holy Ghost”—a phrase easily intelligible in the thirteenth century, when the proverb was current: “The Voice of the People is the Voice of God.”

However, at Paris—which never ranked as a commune—the citizens had hitherto gloried in the reputation of free and independent electors. But Paris was not merely a wealthy trade-centre and seat of industry: it was also the official residence of the sovereign, whose sergeants maintained order in the streets; and the thirty or forty thousand students in the University area were—in virtue of Papal Bull and Royal Charter—exempt from all interference on the part of the municipal authority.

Disturbances were very frequent in the early part of the reign. It is told that St. Louis—when recruiting for the Crusade—saw one morning as he came out from Mass, three dead bodies laid on the steps of the church, and a clerk in custody of his men-at-arms. On enquiry he found that the corpses were those of three of his own sergeants who had been behaving very badly when on patrol the night before, and that the clerk, whom they tried to rob, shot one with a cross-bow, split the skull of another with a sword and stabbed the third as he was running away.

"I will have my sergeants to know," said Louis, "that I will not uphold them in their wickedness. Sir Clerk, your skill with weapons will be wasted in your present career. Come with me overseas and take my wage as man-at-arms."

On his return from Palestine the King found things in Paris if anything rather worse; for, since the rising of the Pastoureaux, the students were allowed to carry arms. The provostship of Paris was sold to the highest bidder, and disorder ran rife in the city; for justice was corrupted at the source by bribes and favour of friends, and ordinary people did not dare to dwell on the King's ground. Louis "searched his realm for a learned and honest man who understood the laws and would apply them alike to rich and poor." And when he found such a one in the person of Stephen Boileau, he engaged him at a high salary, and the sale of the provostship became a thing of the past. Stephen did wonders in his office. Henceforth "no robber or murderer could stay in Paris but was hanged at once: neither friends nor money could save him from paying the penalty of his crime." The several Trade-Guilds were made responsible for the sanitary arrangements and effective policing of the city. The King's surgeon, Pitau, provided it at his own expense

with a plentiful supply of drinking water, and Louis himself built and endowed his famous hospital of the *Quinze Vingts* for the accommodation and maintenance of three hundred blind. Diseases of the eye were at that time rather prevalent among returned Crusaders; Alphonse of Poitou, for instance, suffered from ophthalmia for the remainder of his life.

The Saint provided for the spiritual and intellectual needs of his capital by erecting convents for the "Jacobins and Cordeliers," the names by which the Dominicans and Franciscans respectively were called by the Parisians. He also made over to the Carthusians the Haunted Castle of Vauvert, and these good religious soon did away with its evil reputation. Books were of course scarce and dear in the centuries before printing was invented. We read that Notre Dame, the chief college in Paris, had but fifty volumes for the common use of its own students; and there were many poor scholars who flocked to the famous University "athirst for knowledge and a-hungered for bread"—so poor indeed that we read of three young men with but one gown between them which they wore in turn at the lectures, studying in bed between times. To such as these it was a real godsend to have free access to the splendid library at the Sainte Chapelle, where the good King himself was often

to be met, with kindly words of encouragement and advice. His library at the Louvre, too, was open to all comers, and he sent round to the monasteries in his realm to secure copies of all the manuscripts worth having. Sometimes the monks offered the originals as a gift, but Louis always declined. He preferred copies executed at his own expense, so as to give a wider circulation to good literature.

The Saint was very zealous for the fair fame of his University and often played the part of peacemaker in the disputes between the friars and the lay-professors, which bade fair to lessen its usefulness and reputation. It is not here the place to tell the story of the condemnation by the Pope of the notorious William de Saint Amour, nor of the noble amends made by the Paris Faculty to the Mendicant Orders, on the day when St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure were invested with the Doctor's Cap. But a word must be said about the great residential college founded in this reign, partly at the royal expense, to give to young men of talent and goodwill who had not the grace of a religious vocation, the necessary leisure to prosecute their studies, and the advantages of a regular life removed from the occasions of sin incidental to their age and condition.

The King's confessor, Robert of Sorbon, a

man of lowly birth but gifted with holiness and common sense, conceived the idea of a college where professors and pupils could be housed and boarded, and prosecute their studies without incurring the obligations of the religious state. The equality among the Sorbonists has passed into a proverb. The Senior Fellows looked after the aesthetics, the rules and the traditions of the House, while its temporalities were managed by the Juniors; and the well-to-do paid into the common fund exactly the sum that was spent on the Bursars. The standard of studies was high, and the Sorbonne acquired, very early in its history, a European celebrity for the solution of cases of conscience.

Nor was its founder the only member of Louis's household who attained to high rank in the aristocracy of learning by sheer intellectual ability. Guy Foucaud had served his King as soldier, as Seneschal and lastly as private secretary. Then came a higher call. The Carthusian Hermitage had strong attractions, but his royal master persuaded him to become a secular priest. Eventually he was raised to the highest dignity on earth and, as Pope Clement IV, he wrote to announce his election to the King of France :

“Once it was right and fitting to call you master; then you allowed me to give you the

honourable title of friend. And now I may address you by the sweet name of son, the only one indeed which can rightly express the strong tenderness of my feelings towards you."

Popes in the thirteenth century were not so long-lived as they have been since they were robbed of their temporal power. There were seven occupants of the Chair of St. Peter in the days of St. Louis, and to each, says William of Chartres, "he behaved with reverence, humility, and like a true son of obedience, punctually carrying out their rescripts and mandates in a spirit of holy joy."

"Be always devoted to the Church of Rome" is his dying injunction to the heir of his crown. "Render to the Sovereign Pontiff the honour and respect which you owe him as your spiritual Father."

It was in France that these successive Pontiffs found "true rest and consolation when wearied in spirit with the discords in other nations," to use the words of Clement's predecessor, Urban IV., himself a Frenchman and the son of a shoemaker of Troyes.

Louis, as we have seen, lived on friendly terms with his brother-monarchs; but he could not help contrasting his rule with theirs, when he saw to eastward the unbridled licence to plunder of the German nobles, while piteous

appeals reached him from the south to protect the inhabitants of Guienne from the rapacity of their English governors. So bitterly did the Gascons resent the treaty which deprived them of the peaceful prosperity accruing under Louis's firm and just administration, that after his canonisation they refused for years to keep his feast.

The Emperor Frederick and his sons were clever men, but depraved and cruel. The English monarch, for all his piety and domestic virtues, was but a weakling who oppressed his subjects. With these examples before him, it must have been plain, even to Louis's clear-sighted humility, that the good order in his own dominions was the direct outcome of his own personal and unrelaxed endeavour. And so, while his lawyers were studying how far they could extend the limits of the royal prerogative, King Louis studied anxiously the disposition of his possible inheritors. He was never too busy to make leisure every day for at least an hour's affectionate intercourse with his sons and daughters and his son-in-law, the King of Navarre. All these young people knelt round him each night for family prayers—the beginning of a good custom to be kept up in later life—and they learnt from his example and precept little practices of piety in honour of Our

Blessed Lady and such simple acts of penance as were suited to their age and strength. Many were the holy tales he told them of the good Princes whose example he would have them imitate, and sometimes too he touched upon the crimes and heartless pride of others who came to an evil end.

"I tell you these things," he was careful to add, "that so you may cautiously avoid everything displeasing to God."

His eldest son, Prince Louis, was in his sixteenth year when his father returned from Palestine. He and the young King and Queen of Navarre were the objects of King Louis's especial care. His daughter Isabella sometimes received dainty ivory boxes with horsehair belt or little scourge inside, and a request to use often these disciplines for her own sins and those of her poor father. Her husband, King Theobald, was often Louis's companion when ministering to the sick in the hospitals. At the opening ceremony of the Compiègne foundation, for instance, the two monarchs carried in the first patient, wrapped in a silken sheet. As for Prince Louis, he often waited on the poor at table; and the courtiers were inclined to murmur, we read, when they saw the heir of France on his knees to wash the feet of a beggar. But Louis would not have them blame the boy. No

action that he approved could be degrading to his son. And he continued lovingly to nurture in the heart of the boy, "tall and brave and marvellously wise and gracious," those gentler flowers of pity and kindness which had had, perchance, scant room to unfold in the austere atmosphere of Queen Blanche's guardianship.

"Fair son," he told him once, "I pray thee make thyself beloved by the people of thy kingdom. Know for a certainty, I would rather fetch a Scotsman fresh from Scotland to govern them well and loyally, than that thou shouldst govern them wickedly and blamed by the wise."

But, at the Christmastide of 1259, Prince Louis died, and his death was a terrible shock to the holy King. Like all Saints, he was delicately sensitive in the matter of human affection; and, moreover, his second son Philip was by no means so promising as a future ruler for France. Especially was Louis anxious, when it came to his knowledge that the impetuous boy had signed a paper promising that until the age of thirty he would always act according to his mother's advice and never make alliance with her enemy, Charles of Anjou. Undoubtedly Queen Margaret's interference in matters of state would prove even as disastrous in France as that of her sister Eleanor in the politics of England; and Pope Urban, at the King's request, freed the young Prince from his rash engagement.

Long, anguished nights did the Saint spend on his knees in prayer at that time, till more than once he fell to the ground exhausted and his chamberlains had to help him back to bed. The comforting words of St. Thomas Aquinas restored peace to his troubled spirit, and so frequent were his consultations with the great Dominican that it was whispered abroad that, were it not for the opposition of the Queen, the King was minded to enrol himself among the Friars Preachers. Perhaps there was some ground for the report. He may have wished to watch over Philip in his first essays at kingship, to help him with his counsels, and rectify his mistakes.

The rumour made the people uneasy. They were loath to lose their good King,—all save one old woman named Sarrette who shouted after him one day :

"King of France, indeed ! King of priests and clerks, say I, and King of friars and shavelings ! Oh ! the pity of it that such as thou art King of France, and a wonder thou art not hunted from the realm." Louis only smiled and sent his ushers to her with forty sous.

He was indeed so fond of the friars that he jokingly declared :

"If I could cut myself in two, one half would belong to St. Dominic and the other to St. Francis."

Since his twentieth year he was a fervent member of the Third Order, which the dear Saint of Assisi established to help men, living in the world yet not of it, to attain to a high degree of perfection by the excellent fulfilment of the duties of their state. Hitherto we have followed the old chronicles as they image for us Louis the Sergeant of Christ, stimulating his men to heroism amid the tribulations of the Crusade, and Louis the hard-working, upright statesman who "long time governed the realm of France well and in peace, like the wise and loyal man he was, without taxing the commons and towns-folk more than reason. Very peaceful and rich was France in his time." And now they must mirror forth Louis "the most fervent Christian in his realm," utilising the good store of wealth and prosperity with which God had blessed him to strengthen and beautify the kingdom of Christ within his own soul.

CHAPTER XV

THE SON OF ST. FRANCIS

FRANCE welcomed her monarch home from the Crusade with transports of joy and loyal enthusiasm. His journey from Marseilles to Paris was a series of jubilant ovations. Louis alone was "sad and heavy by reason of the death of his lady mother and of the ill-success of the Holy War, which he set down to his own sins and unworthiness."

"All Christendom has been brought to shame through me," he sighed, and there was cold comfort in the thought that he had done the best he could. For the defeat of such a well-organised army as he commanded but enhanced the glory of the Infidel, and bade fair to discourage Christian Princes from undertaking a new Crusade.

It was noted that he still retained the Cross upon his shoulder—a reminder of the misery in Palestine which it was still in his heart to alleviate and to end. Henceforth such an increase of sanctity was visible in his outward

demeanour that his confessor compares his previous life to silver and his last twenty years on earth to precious gold. True, the gentle sadness that overshadowed these years of patient waiting for the summons of the God of Armies was not incompatible with the holy joy that sparkled through his life and "found a way to the hearts and affections of all." Like most Saints he had a keen sense of humour, so much so that he had to inscribe in his list of mortifications :

"I will not laugh on a Friday, *if I can help it.*"

We read of "seemly abundance" in the royal household, and more noble stateliness than had ever prevailed in the court of his ancestors. Yet the King led a simple and frugal life, and alms-giving on a magnificent scale was the only personal luxury in which he indulged.

"Better be extravagant for the love of God," he said, "than lavish of money in vain pomp and show."

In all that concerned the spiritual life he simply obeyed the direction of his confessors, receiving Holy Communion as often as he was allowed, and needing the curb far more than the spur in the matter of penitential austerities. He heard two or three Masses each day. His cousin Henry III easily outnumbered him in this

respect; but Louis was a busy man and his morning hours were devoted to state affairs. He usually made leisure, later on in the day, to feed his soul on the strong Meat of the Word of God as delivered in his capital by such excellent preachers as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure. And he was assiduous in the reading of good books. He retired very early in the evenings and having blessed and dismissed his children, remained reading in the Bible or in the Fathers till his candle burnt low in the socket. Then he lay down for a few hours' sleep, on his bed of boards with a very thin coverlet. The grooms who slept in the ante-room often heard him rise in the night to pray; and he usually rose after midnight to attend Matins in the royal chapel, going and returning as noiselessly as might be, so as not to disturb their slumbers. It was his custom to assist in choir at all the canonical hours of the Liturgy; and he said besides, every day, the Office of Our Lady and Psalms for the Dead, sometimes when on horseback, more often when resting on his bed after dinner. The nobles murmured, deeming wasted the hours thus spent in direct homage to his Creator.

"And yet I should hear no complaint," argued Louis, "if I spent twice the time at dice, or galloping through the woods with hawk and

hound. It is in serving God that good Kings have learnt to serve the state."

Yet Louis's piety was not of the emotional kind. He often bewailed his lack of tenderness in prayer, and envied in others the gift of holy tears. The same alert brain was at work, whether he was actually speaking to God on his knees, or copying the Divine Exemplar in the active service of his fellow-men. Fra Angelico has caught well the intellectual character of his piety when he paints him kneeling beside St. Thomas, who is showing him the wonders of Our Lady's Glory. The picture is misleading as a portrait, for Louis never donned for private prayer the coronet or jewelled mantle.

His dress was simple as behoved a Franciscan Tertiary, whose vow of moderation forbade the use of bright colours or precious furs. So he ceased to wear scarlet, green or silver grey—there had to be an exception in favour of royal blue—nor was there ever gilding on his stirrups or on the trappings of his horse. His usual robes were of camlet without embroidery, and underneath he wore the habit of St. Francis. Only on festivals, or when he donned his armour to do battle with the Infidels, it was his joy to wear this holy livery so that all might see. And God was pleased to approve by miracle this esteem for the sober garb of penance. For when an

envoy from the Count of Flanders spoke of him contemptuously as "that bigot in a friar's frock," the sacrilegious insolence was not allowed to go unpunished. On the instant he fell down as if struck with epilepsy, his neck twisted, his eyes staring wildly, his face frightful to behold, and his whole body racked with pain.

The cast-off apparel of the Kings of France belonged by custom to the poor of Paris; and lest these should be the losers on account of his simple tastes, Louis was careful to arrange with his almoners for a proportionate increase in the money set aside for alms. Nor did he require his courtiers to copy him in the plainness of his dress. Once in his presence Robert of Sorbon saw fit to take Joinville to task for wearing finer clothes than the King. Joinville of course would not own himself wrong.

"Master Robert," quoth he, "saving the King's grace and yours, I am not to blame if I clothe myself in green cloth and fur, as did my ancestors in years gone by. But you, who are a serf's son, have abandoned the garb of your parents and now wear finer cloth than the King. See if I am not right," he added, turning to the bystanders and placing the lapels of both sur-coats side by side.

Robert was wholly taken aback by this unexpected turning of the tables; and Louis, pitying

his confusion, began to defend him with all his might, deftly praising his humility and his charity, “well known to all.” But, later in the day, he called his son Philip, King Theobald of Navarre, and Joinville himself, and signed to them to sit near him on the ground out of sight of the rest of the court. The two young men demurred at first at the honour of sitting so near the King, but Joinville took his place at once, and so close to Louis that their surcoats touched.

“It was ill-done, my children,” said the Saint, “not to obey me on the instant. See that the like never happen again. Seneschal, I took sides with Master Robert to-day, out of sheer pity for his confusion. But I quite agree with what you said, and I want these young men to know it. A man should dress himself neatly as becomes his rank, so that his wife shall love him the better and his dependents esteem him the more. The wise man gives us this rule as to apparel: ‘Let not grave men blame it as too costly, nor the young men scorn thee for it as too mean.’”

Perhaps Prince Philip repeated this speech to his mother, for we find Queen Margaret gently hinting to her husband that his practice did not accord with his words.

“Madam,” replied Louis with ready wit, “man and wife should always defer to each other’s wishes in things indifferent. So, if I

alter my attire to suit your taste, I shall expect you to dress in accordance with mine."

And of course the Queen was only too pleased to let the matter drop.

The same frugality and liberality of spirit prevailed as to food. Louis kept a good table for his guests; but he himself was very abstemious. He fasted rigorously,—oftener than was required by the Laws of the Church and the Rule of the Tertiaries,—and never ordered anything dainty or particular to be cooked for him, but took patiently what was nearest on the dish.

"The Blessed King," writes Queen Margaret's confessor, "liked big fish, and yet he often refrained from eating of them, sending instead to the kitchen for a smaller and less delicate species. Sometimes he had carved for him a portion of the larger fish, and then sent it to the poor, contenting himself for his dinner with broth. Nor was he ever known to touch early fruit or vegetables, or lampreys when first in season. He purposely spoilt with water whatever exquisite sauces and savoury dishes were set before him. Few men put so much water in their wine as good King Louis." And he never exceeded the allowance marked on his curiously wrought and enamelled drinking cup. In Lent and on other fast-days he refrained altogether from wine, and drank instead beer, which he disliked.

Commentators on the Gospel narrative take notice that in the days of Our Lord, the halt and the blind crowded into the banquet-hall itself or on the steps outside, waiting patiently for the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, or the more savoury contents of the cups and platters discarded by the Pharisees as unclean. But St. Louis—that careful student of Our Saviour's words and spirit—had the poor always with him as his honoured guests. Every day at the hour of the midday meal, six score of beggars flocked to his palace, certain of a plentiful dole of bread and meat or fish. From these he selected three to dine at a little table close by his side, and he often gave to one of them the portion served to himself. William of Chartres mentions a bowl of excellent broth into which the King had broken some pieces of bread before offering it to one of the trio, a man of unwashed hands, all covered with ulcers, who dipped his fingers into the bowl, and having taken out the bread sent the remainder away untasted.

“ Give me back my soup,” said the King, and to the amazement of the guests he finished it with apparent relish, as if he found it exquisitely flavoured. And so it was, with the delicate aroma of mortification and self-conquest.

A few sentences from some pious book were always read at the beginning of dinner and then



St. Louis Feeding the Poor

(From an old print)

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the talk became general on cheerful, interesting topics. For Louis was a pleasant companion, we read, and his speech was well-seasoned with wit. Yet never once did an idle word escape his lips, still less an ill-natured remark. Once Joinville and Robert of Sorbon were whispering together.

“ Speak out,” called the royal host, “ or we shall suspect you are making fun of us. When eating in company, if you have anything pleasant to relate, say it aloud that all may hear. Otherwise be silent.”

After dinner he usually withdrew for a space, and resting on his bed recited with his chaplain psalms and prayers for the faithful departed. Then he returned to his guests, and no talk of business was allowed to encroach upon these lighter moments of the day.

Every rule, however, has its exceptions. When the great St. Thomas Aquinas lost himself in a fit of hard thinking, and brought down his massive fist upon the table with the cry : “ There ! the Manichæans are done for ! ” St. Louis was the first to send for a scribe and tablets, lest the weighty argument should be lost to posterity.

Was the Angel of the Schools, we wonder, one of the two friars in whose presence the King asked Joinville if he would not rather be a

"measly leper" than commit a mortal sin? It is the Seneschal, of course, who gives the anecdote, which we continue in his words:

"And I, who would not tell a lie, replied that I would rather commit thirty mortal sins than be a leper. When the friars had gone away, he beckoned to me in private and made me sit at his feet.

"How dared you answer as you did?" he said, and when I repeated my reply he went on:

"Ah! trifler, silly trifler, how can you talk like that? You must know that there is no leprosy so foul as mortal sin, and the soul guilty of it is like to the devil in hell. . . . I entreat of you, firstly for the love of God, and then for the love which I think you bear me, resolve in your heart rather to suffer every loathsome disease in your body than to sully your soul with the foulness of mortal sin!"

So high in Louis's esteem was purity of conscience that he frequently made a general confession of his whole life. "And yet," comments his confessor, Geoffrey of Beaulieu, "to the glory of God I may say it safely, he was never knowingly guilty of anything that I should condemn as a mortal sin."

"The fits of passion," of which Joinville speaks, were not incompatible with the royal virtue of meekness; since they had usually for

provocation some heinous offence against the law of God. He could beat in sudden wrath a slovenly servant whose habitual negligence occasioned grave inconvenience; but the aged retainer whose torch dropped hot grease on his wounded leg, only received the good-humoured rebuke :

“ John, John, my grandsire would have dismissed you for less than that.”

One chronicler tells us of his stringent army regulations against knights or men-at-arms guilty of wicked actions; and yet another describes how the holy King went by night through the streets with the Archbishop of Paris to exhort sinful women to change their lives and become “ Daughters of God ” in the home which he had provided as a shelter for their weakness.

A sin prevalent in the France of his day—so common indeed as to be spoken of as a national vice—was “ the general plague of shameful oaths and blasphemy.”

“ I have been constantly with him for twenty-two years,” writes Joinville, “ yet never in all that time, for all the passions I have seen him in, did I hear him utter an unseemly word against God, God’s Mother, or any of the Saints in Paradise. Nay, more, I heard from the King’s own mouth, that he would willingly be seared with a red-hot iron on nose and underlip (and he was ill able to bear such torment) if so be

he could root out from his realm this infamous habit of blasphemies and profane oaths."

St. Louis was evidently alluding to the form of punishment prescribed for blasphemies in a statute of Philip Augustus—a statute too severe to be effective as a *détérrent*, though Joinville mentions a rumour that St. Louis on one occasion actually put it in force. It is quite possible that the rumour in this instance was correct, for the saint was a typical man of his time in its best features and must not be judged by twentieth century ideas.

Emerson somewhere remarks that in order to appreciate the beauty and magnificence of our Gothic cathedrals we must think the thoughts of the men who built them—in that grand old period when faith was vivid and strong. In the thirteenth century sins against the second Commandment could not be palliated on the plea of ignorance, and the sins of the intellect were peculiarly abhorrent to men most pitiful to lapses from virtue through human frailty. Thus we find Dante, in his vision of Hell, swooning through sheer compassion for the misery of Francesca da Rimini; but as he plunged deeper in the infernal circles, he "loved the serpents" who nipped the blasphemer and cut short his railing against God.

Mediæval faith might be fiendish. We

shudder, for instance, when we read what contemporary writers say of the death-bed delirium of our Henry II, and there is comfort in the thought that no modern enemy of God believes sufficiently to be able to outrage the Divine Majesty in similar fashion. But, in the heart of Henry's sainted great-grandson, Faith was a virtue most exquisite in its delicate bloom. So strong was his belief in the dogmas of religion, that "no dread of bodily mischief or harm could make him contradict a single one." He loved to quote the reply given by the Count de Montfort when invited to behold the miraculous appearance of Our Saviour in the Sacred Host :

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"Let the Albigenses go see this wonder. As for me, I hold firmly the Doctrine of the Church, and I will not lose the blessing of those who have not seen and have believed."

Louis could admire—and perhaps envy—this robust and soldierly simplicity in Faith. But he lived in an age when Theology held her rightful rank as Queen of the Sciences, with Logic for her willing and capable handmaid. And he spent much time in a city where in churches and schools the great St. Thomas Aquinas was making plain to men of intellect and goodwill the harmony of revelation with right reason. The holy King realised that "Our Arch-Enemy, knowing well that he cannot deprive a

man of the merit of his good works, seeks to ensnare his soul by suggesting doubts against Faith." Great, therefore, was his admiring sympathy with those who held firm amid the assaults of violent temptation. He told Joinville how a clerk confided to the Bishop of Paris his distressing perplexities concerning certain dogmas connected with the Blessed Sacrament—although "he would rather have his limbs cut off one by one while yet alive, than believe aught contrary to the teaching of the Church"—and how the good Bishop consoled him with the thought that God was honoured in his struggles and disposed to reward his loyal service, "just as our King when at war with England esteems and rewards more highly the Governor of La Rochelle on the frontier than the Governor of Montlhéry in the heart of his dominions."

Yet, albeit his own faith was deep-seated and solidly intellectual, St. Louis never presumed to enter the lists in controversial debate. That was the province of the trained ecclesiastic; a knight's proper weapon, he argued, is the sword, "and that he should be ready to plunge to the hilt in the body of the scandalising unbeliever who ventures in his presence to contemn the dogmas of our holy religion."

A truly mediæval sentiment! But in practice Louis was ahead of his age in large-minded

toleration. The Jews in his dominions had little reason to complain of their treatment. In France, as elsewhere, they were "the King's chattels," entirely outside the pale of the ordinary law, and dependent for justice on the royal pleasure. And Louis dealt with them in all honour and fairness. He cast no covetous eye on their wealth, only he would not suffer them to increase it by the practice of usury. "Let them work at an honest trade," he said, "or quit my kingdom." And the Jews, in no hurry to depart from the safe protection of so upright a King, applied their talents to make commerce and industry flourish in France.

"Usury in the Jews is my affair," he often had occasion to repeat. But the layman who ventured on this "breed of barren metal" he left, as the laws directed, to the jurisdiction of the Bishops' courts. He never meddled in ecclesiastical affairs if he could avoid it. The Church in the thirteenth century was thoroughly competent to look after her own interests.

A deputation of clerics once asked him to authorise distress of goods against any person who remained excommunicate a year and a day. Louis declined to interfere. Like the Popes, his contemporaries, he disapproved of the ease with which certain prelates launched their anathemas. Peter Mauclerk, he reminded them,

remained seven years under the ban of a Bishop, and, when at last his case was referred to Rome, judgment was given entirely in his favour.

The Church in France stood in no need of his protection, but it profited largely by his royal bounty. Some of the great cathedrals were begun or beautified in this reign, and “as a writer having made his book illuminates it in gold and azure,” says Joinville, “so did the King enrich his realm with the fair Abbeys which he built therein.” He loved to see multiplied such centres of piety and learning and agricultural improvement, where children came to learn how to grow up good Christians and citizens, and the aged and infirm sought consolation and relief as honoured guests. For “his kingly heart overflowed with a marvellous compassion towards the needy and afflicted, in torrents of charity which flooded all his realm with alms and works of mercy.” His donations to religious of both sexes amounted to £7,000 a year, besides cloth and shoes and sixty thousand herrings in Lent. “For he loved all devoted to the service of God and wearing the Divine livery.”

And here be it noted that St. Louis never seems to have wanted for ready money. His charities were on the most lavish scale, and his Crusades have been called “expensive ideals,”

yet he always managed to pay his way. The royal revenue was not dependent on taxation as we moderns understand the term. The King was the greatest landowner in the country, and like other landowners had his feudal dues, his profit from the fruits of the earth, and the quit-rent paid by commercial corporations. Under his prudent administration the produce of the royal farms increased fifty per cent. "Thrift," he used to say, "is a great help to almsgiving," and in the regulation of his charities it is noteworthy that only the needs of the aged and infirm had to be taken into consideration. An able-bodied pauper was unthinkable in the France of St. Louis's day, "when every rood of ground maintained its man." But there were widows and orphans to maintain; poor gentlemen who had spent their all on the Crusades and had returned from the East, with shattered health, to retrieve their shattered fortunes; clerks who could not at the same time earn their livelihood and prepare themselves by study for a learned career of usefulness; debtors languishing in durance vile—and the memory of his own captivity gave him a fellow-feeling for all poor prisoners. There were disasters from flood and fire and storm; seasons of famine and drought when Louis paid back to the afflicted provinces as much as he received from them in

corresponding periods of plenty; and diseases so prevalent among the lower classes that the pitiful St. Francis of Assisi encouraged his brethren to take up the study of medicine on their behalf.

Louis had his almoners, and their office was no sinecure—for “he gave more alms than can be counted,” say the chroniclers; and they give astounding statistics both as to his regular pensioners and to the casuals whom he met on his journeys. But he esteemed too highly to forego it the twice-blest mercy of personal service. Three poor men, as we have seen, dined with him daily—and sat nearer the King than the nobles durst venture. In addition, twice or thrice in the week he entertained thirteen others in his private suite of rooms, seeing himself to their wants, cutting up the meat for the blind and “removing the bones when it was a fish day.” He preferred helping the blind as it was easier to remain incognito.

His earliest biographers—the men who lived with him and watched him at work—cite many touching traits of his Christ-like tenderness among the poor, but their wealth of detail is outside the scope of this little volume. We shall not, however, get a true idea of the Saint if we omit all reference to their graphic stories.

We must not miss, for instance, the woman at Chateauneuf-sur-Loire, who stood at her door

as he passed along and held out the loaf with which his bounty fed her and her bed-ridden husband.

“Sour bread truly,” quoth Louis, as he broke off a piece and ate it. And crossing the threshold he brought to the bedside of the sick man the honied condiment of gracious words.

We must listen too to the hoarse cry at Compiègne: “Room for the leper!” warning the rest of men to keep to the other side of the road, but luring the Saint across the muddy pools to press some money into the palm of his afflicted brother in Christ.

He sometimes slipped away, unbeknown to his attendants, and craved a night’s shelter in one of the “Hôtels-Dieu” which he himself built and endowed, to ensure to his beloved poor that his works of mercy might last on after his death. Two hundred years after his canonisation “St. Louis’s bed” was still to be seen in the Hospice at Vernon. He was lodged there like the other patients, and far more comfortably than when he slept at home.

At Royaumont—his favourite foundation—there was Leger, a leper monk, whose loneliness he never failed to cheer by lengthy visits to his hut whenever he visited the Abbey. He tasted the wine provided and pronounced it good, but sent out into the town for capon and part-

ridge to tempt the sick man's appetite by variety in the meat. The first time he served him—on bended knee as was his wont—he made the mistake of seasoning each morsel with salt, and great was his distress to perceive how he had hurt unwittingly the poor swollen lips and made them bleed.

Very deft and tender, and almost fastidious in his care for cleanliness, was the holy King in his favourite rôle as sick-nurse, washing his hands twice while peeling a pear for one poor patient, sprinkling the beds with fragrant rose-water, providing abundance of fair white linen for the use of the sick, and kneeling for their greater convenience as he gave them their food and medicine. Many times his attendants left the ward, so repugnant was it to them to breathe the foul and infected air. But often too the knights in his train were moved to imitate his reverent ministrations and heroic charity.

Joinville was not of the number. "He asked me once," says this truthful writer, "if I washed the feet of the poor on Holy Thursday.

"'For shame, no,' said I, 'and never will I wash the feet of such fellows.'

"'Truly you are wrong,' said he, 'to despise what Christ Himself once did to instruct us by His Example.'"

The "Maundy" almsgiving and washing of

feet was a custom piously observed then, as in our own day, by Catholic sovereigns in Europe every year on Holy Thursday. But Louis let no week pass without performing this devout act of charitable humility, and three troughs of water were set for this purpose every Saturday in his private apartments. The poor were not always grateful : one grumbler told him to do it over again and do it thoroughly. And Louis meekly obeyed.

There were always some among the courtiers to criticise and to scoff. But, generally speaking, the men of the thirteenth century had vivid faith in the Incarnation, and they esteemed their King the more as they witnessed his loving fidelity to follow close in the Footprints of Our Divine Redeemer.

And little did Louis care whether they blamed or praised. When the men of Paris called down blessings on his head on the occasion of some appreciated largesse, he only answered with a laughing allusion to his stringent édicts against profanity in speech :

“ Your present prayers will profit me less, I trow, than your former curses.”

Perhaps he felt some wistful sadness as he knelt in the Sainte Chapelle, and contrasted the honours paid to his crown with the blasphemous infamies of the scene of mock royalty in the

guardroom at Jerusalem; and passionate were his prayers that Christ his King would once again enroll him in the army of His Cross.

And after eighteen years of weary expectancy and patient plodding amid the duties of his position and the faithful practice of the virtues of every-day life, there came at last the summons to face the humiliations and apparent failure of his second expedition against the Infidel. There is calm, deliberate heroism in the renewed attempt after the bitter experience of the past.

“ These Thorns are sharp, yet I can tread on them,
The Cup is loathsome, yet He makes it sweet;
My face is steadfast towards Jerusalem,
My heart remembers it.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE LAST CRUSADE

AT Pentecost in 1267 Prince Philip, the heir of France, and his cousin, Count Robert of Artois, received their knighthood at the hand of St. Louis, and were taken by him on pilgrimage to the Abbey of St. Denis which he often made the objective of his rides. He loved to spend long hours in prayer and meditation amid the tombs of his ancestors, and ever and anon the cry "How long, O Lord, how long?" burst from his lips, as he lifted his eyes to the oriflamme drooping in heavy folds above the high altar. For he still considered himself a soldier of the Cross, and he had not yet redeemed his promise to bring back that red-gold banner in efficacious succour to the Christians in the Holy Land.

The knighting of his eldest son entitled the King to a special "Aid" from his Barons, and he was careful to exact it to the uttermost farthing. Yet the festivities at the court that Pentecost, though joyous, were on an extremely frugal scale. Joinville, for instance, was not allowed

to carry off the golden goblet out of which King Theobald had drunk, and to which as Seneschal of Champagne he considered himself entitled. Indeed, during the last few years there had been a great drawing in of expenses in every department of the royal household, and the King and his brother Alphonse pored long hours over the account-books of the royal demesne.

For the trend of calamities in the East gave prospect of a fresh Crúsade. These calamities were not entirely due to the Infidel. Since Louis's departure from Syria there had been endless quarrels among the Christians themselves, and open war between the two great Military Orders. A pitched battle in 1259 was so fiercely fought that only one Templar escaped alive, to bring news to his brethren of the victory won by the Knights of St. John. There was constant friction too between the Venetians and the Genoese, who each wanted trade supremacy in the Levant. And in 1261 the Greeks drove the Latin Emperors from Constantinople.

The Saracens were at first unable to profit by these dissensions. Another wave of Tartar invasion swept westwards over northern steppes and southern deserts, destroying in its advance the dynasty of Haroun-al-Raschid at Bagdad. The Syrian Mahometans, thus deprived of their official centre of unity, split into petty sects,

each waging war upon the other. In Egypt too there was a series of little revolutions and of murders in the palace at Cairo, till at last when Bibars Bendocda, the head of the Mamelukes, told his men he had killed the Sultan, they merely made answer :

“ Well, you have got to take his place. See that you lead us to victory ! ”

This Bibars had been one of St. Louis's most formidable opponents in the Mansourah campaign. He was a fierce zealot, and an able commander who soon drove back the Tartars and forced the Syrian Emirs to bow to his supremacy and march with him against the hated Christians. Soon there was no slave in Bibars's army but had at least one captive as his share in the spoils. One after another the Christian strongholds fell into his hands, and Europe was thrilled with terror as tales of his ferocity travelled west.

At Bethulia, for instance, the remnant of the garrison was penned on a hill outside the city walls, and offered the usual alternative : apostasy or death. Only one of the two thousand turned renegade; the others were massacred in cold blood, and their bodies left unburied. But God so honoured his martyrs by a glorious radiance, night after night, that Bibars was at last fain to order them to be honourably interred.

We have his own hideous bulletin for the details of the sack of Antioch : knights crushed beneath horses' hoofs, women and children sold by auction, priests stabbed at the foot of the altar, horrible pollution of the tabernacle and Sacred Scriptures, whole streets ablaze, and the wretched citizens thrust back into the flames from which they vainly sought to flee.

Similar tragedies were enacted elsewhere and at last only Acre remained unscathed — a door ajar for the flow of commerce, and possibly in the mind of Bibars a bait to lure more Franks overseas to fight him and be conquered in their turn.

But the West was slow to move. Again and again from the Holy Land the piteous cry reached Rome : "Christ sleeps ! Christ who once fought for us !" The Popes were in no hurry to proclaim a Crusade, and for years they disregarded the persistent pleading of St. Louis and his reiterated offer of personal service. They knew how frail was his health, how necessary to France the mild firmness of his presence. But after many years his perseverance prevailed, or rather the lengthening chain of disasters in the East forced a reluctant consent from Clement IV.

" Go forward bravely, dearest Son, Son of my love and fullest blessing ; and may God prosper your undertaking ."

The Crusading fires burnt low in Europe and any other save the holy King would have been discouraged by the half-hearted response which greeted his call to arms. The memories of former failures still rankled in the minds of Frenchmen, rendering them reluctant to assume the Cross and ingenious in finding excuse for their reluctance.

One knight—surely an ancestor of Jansenists—argued : “ If we go we shall displease God because we take part in His Holy War, not out of zeal for religion, but solely to please the King, and lest his safety be imperilled by our default.”

Joinville was more cogent in his mediæval common sense.

“ I was hard pressed by King Louis and King Theobald,” he writes, “ but I told them both roundly that the last time I adventured overseas my people were so harassed and impoverished by the royal officers of France and of Champagne that I deemed it my duty to stay at home lest further damage befall, and I should anger God in acting otherwise. I said further, and I cared not who heard it, that it was a mortal sin to encourage the King in his going. While he was at home all things went well, and the realm had peace in its fiefs and with its neighbours. But on his departure things would alter for the worse.”

What Joinville said, all Frenchmen thought at the time. "Great shame it was," he flamed forth again, "and great sin was theirs who suffered the King to depart, and he so weak that he could scarce sit his horse or endure the weight of his armour. Yet, ill as he was, he might have lived to a ripe old age had he stayed quietly at home and busied himself with his alms and prayers and the right ruling of his realm."

Queen Margaret, too, shrank—and one can scarce blame her—from the hardships and heats of a southern campaign. She had been most helpful to Louis all through his first expedition—in Cyprus, in Palestine, and more especially when maintaining order and infusing energy during the dark days at Damietta. It was a distinct disappointment to him now that she did not take the Cross, but he realised that she had good grounds for her abstention. Her health and her nerves were not very strong; and friction was inevitable whenever she came in contact with Charles of Anjou.

Charles was now established on the throne of the Two Sicilies, after much hard fighting and the death on the scaffold of his youthful competitor, Conradin, grandson of the Emperor Frederick. Good success had always crowned his campaigns, and his firm administration of the laws made for prosperity within his do-

minions. But his harsh rule alienated from him the hearts of his subjects even while they benefited by its justice, and the German and Spanish knights formally withdrew from the Crusade when they found it meant serving under the same banner as the King of the Sicilies.

For Charles approved his brother's enterprise and offered the help of his army and of his own military experience. Only he stipulated that Louis should confer with him before determining his plan of campaign. Alphonse of Poitou also, with his quiet unobtrusive helpfulness, kept close to his royal brother all through the three strenuous years of preparation. He and his Countess Jeanne were among the first to take the Cross. Other recruits were enrolled as time went on, actuated it may be, less by motives of religion than by personal affection for the King, or because they were of his kindred. Never before was there feudal army with a larger proportion of knights entitled to wear coronets around their casques. The holy King did not find it difficult to fire with his own soldierly enthusiasm for the things of God the younger generation of the Royal Family, notably the King and Queen of Navarre, three of his own sons—Robert was too young—and his nephews and godsons in chivalry, Robert of Artois and Edward and Edmund of England. He had to lend Prince Edward

sufficient money to equip and pay his troop; but he valued rightly the bravery and military talent of the long-limbed, fair-haired Plantagenet, and he gladly received his oath of fealty "to obey the King of France as his man, like any Baron of his realm."

It was easier to find funds. Louis's subjects paid him very readily all that he asked in the way of taxation. Only the clergy remonstrated at the large levy which the Pope expected them to offer, in addition, to the King. But there was no such elaborate storing of supplies as on the occasion of the former Crusade, and such silence was maintained as to the destination of the troops that historians have grounds for doubting whether Louis knew it himself when he set sail from Aigues-Mortes.

The whole tenor of his preparations suggests the leader of a forlorn hope expecting to meet his death in the straight line of duty. He left the regency of his realm to Simon lord of Nesle, and Matthew of Vendôme, Abbot of St. Denis. Both were wise and enlightened men, capable of decided action in unforeseen emergencies, and the King wrote out for them elaborate instructions that "for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother they may have great care of the little ones among my people."

There were affectionate counsels too to be

pondered and prayed over and written down, for the future guidance of his eldest son and his devoted daughter, Isabella Queen of Navarre. And then, his Last Will and Testament needed time and thought, that his works of mercy might endure after his demise. The magnificence of his bequests merely testifies to the lavish scale of his charitable expenditure during life. No detail was too trivial to be included—not even the thirty pounds a year to provide soup every day for his eighty blind pensioners in the hospice at Melun. The allotment of one legacy must have caused him a pang. He knew that the heir to his crown did not inherit his own taste for reading and zeal to circulate good books, and so his splendid collection in the Aumry of the Sainte Chapelle had to be divided among the Paris Jacobins and Cordeliers and the first fruit of his pious foundations, the Benedictine Abbey of Royaumont.

The Church mitigates in favour of reigning monarchs the strictness of her law of enclosure. It was one of Louis's refreshing relaxations during the strenuous anxieties of his last years in France to ride along the willowed margin of the Seine to the holy solitude of Longchamp, where the daughters of St. Clare lived happy lives of prayer and penance under the guidance of his own beloved sister, Blessed

Isabella. But, in the February of 1270, the nuns gathered sorrowing around the deathbed of their Abbess, and Louis came to pray by her bier and to assist with his suite at the modest funeral. Calm and recollected he stood at the door of the cloister lest any unauthorised outsider should unwarily intrude, and after the ceremony he sat awhile with the Sisterhood, exerting himself to soothe their sorrow by thoughtful words of sympathy and promises of care for their future needs. If he realised—as we think he did—how soon he was to meet this tenderly beloved sister in Eternal Rest and Perpetual Light, there is little cause for wonder in the serenity of his resignation.

No such anticipations of a speedy reunion softened the bitterness of his parting with the Queen, for Margaret's widowhood was to endure over a quarter of a century. She died in the reign of her grandson, Philip the Fair, just eighteen months before her husband was canonised. Many tears were shed by both as they bade one another farewell at Vincennes, where Margaret remained to weep in seclusion, while Louis rode on to fetch the oriflamme from St. Denis. There was another heart-rending scene on March 15, when he finally left Paris for the south. The crowds who lined the route sank on their knees as he passed, to crave his blessing, and Louis in return

begged them to pray for his success—not, be it noted, for his safe return.

We find a clue to his own feelings in his solemn interview with his three sons, whom he summoned to his pavilion at Aigues-Mortes when all the good-byes had been said.

“ Fair sons,” he began, “ you see how, old as I am, I undertake a second time the voyage overseas, leaving your mother—also stricken in years—and my kingdom, prosperous and flourishing. I am sacrificing in the cause of God my rest and my enjoyment of life—its wealth, its honours and its comforts; and yet, I but do my duty as a Christian King. I am taking you all with me as well as your eldest sister. I would also have taken little Robert were he old enough to bear arms as a soldier of Christ.”

Then, turning to Philip, he went on: “ Pay good heed to my words, so that after my death when it is your turn to be King, neither wife nor children nor kingdom may be a stumbling block in your way when it is your duty to uphold the cause of Christ and defend his Holy Church.”

There was a tedious wait at Aigues-Mortes, for the Venetians feared to damage their trade with the Saracens in the Levant if they hired out their ships, as they had contracted, for the transport of the Crusaders. There was nothing

for it but a round of pageantry and stately revel lest the troops should become demoralised in forced inaction. Finally the Genoese Admiral came with his fleet, and on July 1 the shores of France were left behind.

There was another bit of unpleasantness at Cagliari, where Charles of Anjou had agreed to meet them. The French arrived first at the tryst, but the Sardinians, who were unfriendly to the Genoese, refused to take the sick ashore or even to sell them water and fresh provisions. The Barons were for "destroying this city and this people, the worst we have ever met," but the King would not sanction reprisals.

"Our vow is to fight the Infidel," he reminded them. "We need our strength to do battle for the cause of God; let us not exhaust it in righting our private wrongs."

As soon as the Sicilians arrived, a council of war was held. All agreed that it was useless to sail for Palestine while Bibars held the hills and was in a position to capture Acre (now the sole Christian port) before their ships could reach it. Egypt was equally impossible. That country was now the central stronghold of Islam, its control extending eastward throughout Syria and westward along the Barbary sea-board, whence it drew unlimited supplies of horses and horsemen. So there was sound sense in Anjou's

suggestion even if it were not actuated by motives purely disinterested :

“ Let us begin by Tunis, conquer or convert its Sultan, and then, leaving no enemies in our rear, fight our way steadily to Jerusalem by way of Egypt.”

The more the scheme was discussed, the more evident did its merits appear. Tunis lay within easy reach of France, and its harbours were nests of piracy, rendering the Mediterranean unsafe for Christian ships. Especially was it an awkward neighbour for Sicily. The Kings of that island were entitled to a heavy tribute which had not been paid for many years, and Tunisian cavalry had fought on the side of Conraddin during the late war. But the point that weighed most with Louis was the leaning to Christianity manifested by the present Sultan, Abou Abdullah Mohammed. The holy King yearned to be “ the godfather of such a godson,” and had said to his envoys a few years before :

“ Tell your master I desire so strongly the salvation of his soul, that to secure it I would gladly spend the rest of my life in chains in a Saracen prison and never again behold the light of the sun.”

And now perhaps the chance had come to make his words good, and there was added sweetness in the thought that his work for God lay in the

region which the great St. Augustine had hallowed by his teaching and saintly life. And so, while his Barons approved of Charles's proposal for reasons dictated by worldly prudence, this passionate lover of our Incarnate Redeemer offered himself anew to slake his thirst for souls in any suffering or ignominious contumely God might give him grace to endure.

There was but one dissentient voice in the council. Edward of England, serenely ignorant of military geography, was for pushing straight on to Jerusalem. The Crusade, in his eyes, bade fair to degenerate into a sordid war for the benefit of Sicily, and his pity for Louis's blindness, as he deemed it, was commensurate with his wrath against Charles of Anjou. So he craved leave to withdraw with his men into Sicily till the Tunis experiment had failed and the real crusading began in Syria. Perhaps too he wished to keep an eye on Charles, for Charles also remained behind to complete his preparations, and Louis promised to await the arrival of his troops in Africa before undertaking anything of importance.

Carthage was sighted on July 17, and a landing was effected unopposed, so completely were the natives taken by surprise. Louis traced with his sword the limits of his camp on the actual site of ancient Carthage, amid broken



Landing of St. Louis at Carthage

(Paris 1518)

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pillars of variegated marbles half buried in debris and accumulated sand, while locust trees and acanthi waved over the ruins of a civilisation that had lapsed.

The great Roman aqueducts were still there, but choked with sand and rubbish. There were no wells in the neighbourhood, and the army suffered terribly from the dearth of good drinking-water and the badness and scarcity of the food. The heat, too, was oppressive and unhealthy, and the sand-laden winds from the desert brought no relief from the pitiless glare of the fierce African sun.

The Sultan showed himself hostile from the first. In response to Louis's friendly overtures he imprisoned all the Christians settled in his states and announced his intention of killing them all on the day the French began their march towards his capital. He sent back, too, a most insulting challenge in verse, to intimate in picturesque language that Tunis was the sister of Cairo, and had dungeon and gaoler in readiness for the King of the Franks should he venture foolishly to delay his journey home.

While waiting for the reinforcements which Bibars was certain to send or bring, Mohammed organised his defences and massed troops round Tunis. Meanwhile his horsemen swarmed around the Christian tents "like flies," and

added to the general discomfort by concerted manœuvres with their “praying carpets” so as to beat up the hot sand from the surrounding desert. But they did not venture on a direct attack, and Louis forestalled any erratic skirmishing by a *péremptory* order to his men not to venture beyond the trenches which he had caused to be dug to protect his camp.

It was not the Sultan’s braggart threats, but his own promise to Charles, which kept him inactive amid his pestiferous surroundings. Dysentery soon broke out—all the soldiers suffered more or less—and the air was further fouled by the hastily dug graves, far too shallow and too near the tents. The Papal Legate and Prince Tristan were the first to succumb. On the third of August, word of their death was brought to Louis on the bed where sickness and ague were rapidly exhausting his strength.

His last illness was of a piece with the rest of his life. There does not seem to have been acute pain; his mind remained unclouded to the very end; and, weak as he was, he refused some chicken-broth on a Friday until his confessor had been sent for to grant him a special dispensation. No duty was left undone: up to the eve of his death there were special and protracted audiences granted to the envoys from the Greek Emperor, who wished to contract an

alliance with France, and held out hopes of a return to Catholic unity in allegiance to the See of Peter. Otherwise there remained but little now of the cares of earth—merely a loving talk with each of his children in turn, the arrangements for his son's funeral and for his own, and provision for the payment of his few debts “lest his creditors be embarrassed for their money and perhaps hindered from returning to France.” All these matters were attended to in detail with method and composure, and still there remained much leisure to pray, and await with a steady smile the friendly approaches of Death. During the last fortnight Louis did not encourage visitors: he preferred to be left as much as possible with his confessor and chaplains.

His tent was truly a House of Prayer where the Divine Office was chanted by the priests at the proper Canonical Hours. Louis's devotions, as we have already indicated, were largely liturgical, and like most mediæval Saints his mind was richly stored with the prayers and psalmody of public worship. And now, as he lay dying, the Sacred Liturgy was his great comfort; and the snatches of psalms and collects that fell from his lips at intervals betrayed to the bystanders the tenor of his thoughts through the long hours when he lay motionless, his eyes closed or fixed lovingly on the crucifix beside his bed, while a

holy, patient smile lit up his emaciated features. He seemed to be without anxiety as far as he himself was concerned, for he prayed but little for his personal needs, just his usual favourite petition from the Collect of St. Denis :

“ We pray Thee, O Lord, that we may despise the joys of this world and never tremble at its sorrows.”

But his dear Frenchmen, clearly, were uppermost in his mind : in death as in life he realised his responsibilities as “ Sergeant of Christ.”

“ Do Thou, O Lord, be the Sanctifier and the Guardian of this Thy people,” he prayed with the Church in her Collect for the Feast of St. James. And oftener still and from the bottom of his heart he repeated with fervour : “ O Lord, have pity on Thy people whom I have led hither. Send them to their homes in safety. Deliver them from the hands of their enemies, that they be neither forced nor enticed to deny Thy Holy Name.”

On August 24, St. Bartholomew’s Day, he received the Last Sacraments, and contrived, though with great difficulty, to rise from his bed and kneel on the bare ground for Holy Communion.

That night he dozed at intervals and usually woke up singing snatches of an old French hymn :

lor et commençerent les fus



le premi^e le pere saint lors ala en
au^eutnon

ou leuons auoir en
memoire les fus et
les conteneantes de
se nancier et condic



Death of St. Louis

(Reproduced, with the permission of the Governors, from a fifteenth century manuscript
of the *Chroniques de Saint Denys* in the John Rylands Library, Manchester)

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“ Nous irons à Jérusalem.”

Next day at noon he entered into his agony—if it can be called an agony when the smile never left his lips and remained stereotyped in death—and he spent it, as he had previously arranged, on a bed of ashes covered with sacking.

“ I will enter into Thy House,” he murmured. “ I will adore in Thy Holy Temple and I will confess Thy Name.”

And then he remained silent until three o’clock, when he peacefully expired, the dying words of Jesus upon his lips :

“ Father, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit.”

Soon the curtains of the tent were lifted up so that the whole French army might prolong their farewell gaze on the emaciated features, smiling still in death. The sentiment uppermost in the soldiers’ hearts has been aptly expressed by Geoffrey de Beaulieu, the Dominican priest whose sacred ministry had blessed and strengthened Louis to the very end :

“ For him it is surely right to rejoice, weep as we may, for France and for the Church. At last, freed from all the ills of this mortal life, he reigns triumphant among the Saints.”

At the very hour of this death, so precious in the sight of God, a joyous peal of trumpets borne across the waters of the bay announced the

approach of the Sicilian fleet. But the martial strains were hushed as no welcoming cheers reached the ships from the shore. Charles of Anjou landed in silence and went at once to his brother's bier.

"My lord, my brother!" he sobbed aloud, his harsh features convulsed with anguish, while he covered the feet and hands of the dead with passionate kisses, and tears of grief not unmixed with remorse, rolled down his rugged cheeks.

But there was little leisure to indulge his sorrow. He had to nerve himself to meet the Infidel in battle, for the command of the army had now devolved upon him. A short, strenuous campaign ensued, and the French were in the main victorious. But the Crúsade was practically at an end. All were eager to leave these calamitous shores, and Edward of England arrived just in time to curl his lip in scorn at the sordid terms of the treaty which was hastily arranged with the Sultan.

Mohammed agreed to leave the Christians free to build churches in his states as long as they did not attempt to convert the Mahometans. Special trading privileges were conceded to Sicilian merchants, and the tribute claimed by Charles of Anjou was in future to be punctually paid. And when at the end of November the

French fleet weighed anchor in the Bay of Carthage, two hundred and ten thousand ounces of gold were shipped aboard one of the largest *dromonds*, the Sultan's war indemnity to France for the expenses incurred in the campaign.

So St. Louis's last Crusade ended, like the preceding one, in apparent failure. There had been a rough attempt to embalm his body, but the army would not hear of its being taken to France until all were ready to accompany it. The journey home was a series of disasters. First there was a terrible storm at sea. Eighteen ships were wrecked and the treasure wrung from the Sultan was irretrievably lost. And between the landing at Trapani and the arrival at St. Denis there were three more deaths in the royal family—the King and Queen of Navarre, and Isabella of Aragon, the youthful consort of King Philip of France.

The funeral procession wound very slowly through Sicily and Italy, along the valley of the Rhone and across Champagne to St. Denis. It was the last of Louis's progresses through his states, and like his other journeys was marked by enduring tokens of his pitiful compassion for the poor and the afflicted. The sick, the halt and the blind came at every stage to touch his bier, and in numerous cases their faith was rewarded by instantaneous cure. Paris was

reached in the middle of May, and here the three sons of St. Louis took in turns upon their shoulders the cedar-wood coffer enclosing his precious relics and carried it barefoot all the way to the vaults at St. Denis.

The King had left directions that his tomb was to be plain and unadorned; but in this one particular there was a pious disregard for his wishes. His monument, inlaid with silver, soon became a shrine where pilgrims knelt to pray and where, as Joinville tells us, "many and great miracles were wrought at his intercession."

The memory of the holy King was not suffered to grow cold in the hearts of his subjects, nor was it confined to one people or to one generation. Men of honour and prudence, who had lived with him in intimacy, set themselves to enrich the world with the truthful record of his life. First we must mention William of Nangis, the Benedictine Chronicler at St. Denis, whose devotion prompted him to rewrite in French the Annals of St. Louis's reign which it was his official duty to compile in Latin.

Then we have the Latin biography by Louis's Dominican confessor, Geoffrey of Beaulieu, completed by another Dominican, William of Chartres, who had been his almoner in Egypt and the Holy Land. Both these friars had been with him on his deathbed.

There is another Latin *Life of my Lord St. Louis* from the pen of the Franciscan William of Pathus, who for eighteen years was confessor to Queen Margaret and afterwards fulfilled the same duty to her daughter Blanche, the pious consort of King Ferdinand of Castile. Perhaps we owe to these ladies the touching, homely details which give to this work its peculiar interest and charm.

Nor must we forget the Sire de Joinville, who portrays for us the holy King as his Barons knew him, in his *Book of St. Louis's Holy Words and Good Deeds* and again in his *History and Chronicle of the Most Christian King, St. Louis*. Circumstantially truthful in recording the events he has himself witnessed, and careful to warn us whenever he writes from hearsay, Joinville has always been the most popular of Louis's biographers. Unfortunately his *Memoirs* have not come down to us exactly as he wrote or dictated them—and we have no means of knowing which of the variants most nearly resembles the original manuscript.

Joinville reached a ripe old age—some say he was over a hundred when he died. He lived long enough, at all events, to see his royal master canonised by Pope Boniface VIII in the year 1297; and intensely happy was the aged knight that he had himself been questioned before the

Papal Commissioners for the space of two days as to "the life and manners of the holy King."

Soon afterwards the worthy Seneschal dreamt that he saw St. Louis all in glory in the chapel at Joinville assuring him, with a joyous laugh, that he was in no hurry to go away. On awaking the old man bethought him it would please God and his late lord to have an altar erected and a Mass said every day in honour of God and St. Louis. Fain would he have lodged in this little shrine "some part of the relics of the Saint's real holy body," but the reigning monarch, Louis X, does not seem to have granted his request.

The heart of St. Louis was claimed by Charles of Anjou and remained in Sicily. The greater portion of his relics were in Paris at Notre Dame, at La Sainte Chapelle and in the original shrine at St. Denis. They did not escape the Sans-Culottes of the Revolution, too ignorant in their blind fanaticism to appreciate in the saintly King even the patriotic philanthropy which wrung an admiring tribute from Voltaire himself. Voltaire was no lover of Saints, Crusaders, or Christian kingship, yet he wrote in his *Essai sur les Moeurs* :

"St. Louis was the man to reform Europe, had Europe been capable of reform. This King caused France to be honoured abroad and gave

her an organised government. He was in all respects a model man. His piety was that of a hermit, but this did not detract from his kingly virtues. Nor was his open-handed liberality the worse for his prudent thrift. Perhaps he is the only monarch entitled to be praised as a clever statesman and withal perfectly just and fair. Prudent and firm in the council chamber, brave but not rash on the battle-field, he was as full of compassion as if he had never known aught save misfortune. Is it given to man to practise virtue in a higher degree?"

THE END

APPENDIX A.

LETTER OF ST LOUIS TO HIS DAUGHTER ISABELLA QUEEN OF NAVARRE

*To his dear daughter, Isabella Queen of Navarre,
a father's greeting and loving benison.*

BELOVED DAUGHTER,

As I think that out of the great love you bear me you set greater store by my advice than that of other men, I am writing for you with my own hand some words of counsel. And first of all, my beloved daughter, I would urge you to love the Lord our God with all your heart and with all your strength. Love is the only thing of yours which He values and naught outside the love you give Him can be of profit to your soul. He is the Lord to whom each one of His creatures may say, "Thou art my God who hast no need of my goods." He is the Lord who sent His Only Begotten Son to earth, and delivered Him up to death that we might be set free from the bonds of sin and hell.

Dear daughter, it will profit you much to love so good a God. That heart has gone far astray which loves any created being unless in Him and less than Him. The only measure of our love for God should be to love Him without stint or measure. He well deserves our love, for He loves us and has loved us from all eternity.

Consider diligently, I pray you, all that the Blessed Son of God has done and suffered for our Redemp-

tion. O beloved daughter, strive to please Him, and shun the things which you know to be hateful in His sight. Above all things, I entreat of you, keep clear of mortal sin. Far better that your limbs be torn asunder, or that you should suffer all the cruel pangs of a martyr's death, than that your soul should be sullied by a single mortal sin. Make frequent confession to some holy and learned priest who will give you sound advice as to the things you may safely do, and timely warning as to the things you must leave undone. And always show yourself so humble and discreet that your confessor and your other friends may not be afraid to instruct and rebuke you boldly.

I trust, my dear daughter, you will always love to take part in the public worship of the Church. When you are at prayer put away from you all useless thoughts and keep your mind attentive to the words your lips pronounce. Let your prayer be in peace and recollected, and strive especially that it be made with great earnestness before the Consecration in the Holy Mass, and when the Sacred Body of Christ is really present on the altar.

Beloved daughter, hearken willingly to sermons, and to the pious conversation of godly men. Avoid talking in private with any save the holy and prudent.

Strive to gain all the indulgences in your power.

If God sees fit to send you any suffering or displeasure, bear it willingly and with thanksgiving, knowing it to come from His Fatherly Hand. For you must be firmly persuaded that He only permits it for your good, and you must humbly acknowledge that you deserve all this—yea, and far more, should He deem fit to send it, because you have loved Him so coldly, and so often transgressed His Commandments. In like manner, when things go well with you, thank God humbly and refer it all to Him. In this way you will shun the pitfalls of vain glory and other vices. For it were shame indeed and grievous sin to outrage God by the very benefits His Mercy has bestowed upon us. When you suffer anguish of

mind speak of it to your confessor, or to some one on whose prudence you can rely, for this will relieve your heart and enable you to bear it better.

Dear daughter, deal gently with those whom you know to be suffering from spiritual or bodily ills, and consider how you can best relieve them with alms, advice, or words of comfort and cheer.

Esteem all good men, whether religious or secular, who make profession to serve and honour God. Love and succour the poor, especially such as have made themselves poor out of love for Our Lord.

Dear daughter, as far as it depends upon you admit in your household only persons of good repute. See to it, in particular, that the maids who are in constant attendance upon you lead virtuous and holy lives.

Be always humbly obedient to your husband and mother in such things as are pleasing to God. Obey them with alacrity, because you love them, and also because God so wills it, and expressly commands you to honour them for His sake. But in things that are contrary to the law of God, you must never obey.

Take such pains to be perfect in all good things, that you may be a pattern to those who see you or hear about you. Methinks it were good that you should not have larger store of robes and jewellery than your rank requires. What is over and above will enable you to increase your alms. And I think too, it were better not to spend too much time in decking and adorning your person. In a word, be not too fastidious about your apparel and its arrangement. Always incline to do too little, rather than too much, in that respect.

Beloved daughter, let one great longing fill your heart—the longing to serve Our Lord more diligently and to please Him. Aim at attaining so pure a love of God that, even if you were certain He would neither reward nor blame you, you would still refrain from evil and apply your heart to acquire with all diligence the virtues which are pleasing to him.

As often as you can, join in prayer with good men and entreat of them to pray for you. And, if it please God to call me out of this world before you, I earnestly beg of you to have Masses said, and prayers and good works offered up, for the eternal repose of my soul.

I prefer that you should not show this letter, without my leave, to any one except your brother.

May Our Lord render you as perfect as I wish you to be, and grant you in addition all that which He knows may be good for you, and which I, in my ignorance, omit to specify.

AMEN.

APPENDIX B.

INSTRUCTIONS OF KING LOUIS THE SAINT TO PHILIP HIS SON.

My son, before all things I recommend to you that you love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your strength. Be always ready to suffer any manner of torments rather than commit a mortal sin. When sickness or any other affliction befalls you, return thanks to God for it and bear it cheerfully, knowing that you deserve to suffer much more for having served God so ill, and that such tribulations will be your gain. In prosperity, humbly thank God, and beware lest by pride you misuse God's benefits, and so offend Him and do Him wrong, by the very mercies which He gives you in order to serve Him better. Confess your sins frequently, and choose a wise and pious confessor who will teach you what to practise and what to shun. Let him be one who will boldly admonish you of your faults and make you understand their heinousness. Follow the Divine Office devoutly, and meditate affectionately in your heart on what you ask of God with your mouth. Pray with especial earnestness during Mass, above all after the Conse-

cration. Be bountiful, compassionate, and courteous towards the poor, and relieve and favour them in every way you can. Maintain the good customs of your realm and abolish the bad. Do not deal covetously with your people, and tax them only when it is absolutely necessary. If anything trouble your mind, reveal it to your confessor, or to some other grave and discreet person; for the comfort you will thus receive will help you to bear it more patiently. Love to converse with holy men, whether clerks or laymen. Admit among your familiar friends only such as are virtuous and of good repute. Shun and banish from your court men of vicious life. Listen gladly to the Word of God and ponder it in your heart. Endeavour to gain the benefit of indulgences and earnestly entreat the prayers of others. Love all things good and abhor all things evil. Let none dare in your presence to slander another, or to say any word which attracts or tempts others to sin. Punish all who blaspheme God or His saints. Thank God often for all the good He has done to you; and so, perchance, you may deserve more of His benefits. In the administration of justice, be upright and severely impartial. Hear patiently the complaints of the poor, and uphold their interests until the truth shall be made clear. If any has an action against you, stand for your adversary against yourself, for so your councillors will be emboldened to deliver judgment in accord with conscience. In the case of property which you or your ancestors may have acquired unjustly, restore it promptly to its rightful owner if his claim is manifestly just; if it be doubtful, have careful enquiries made by wise and upright men. Make it your study how your subjects may live in peace and justice under your rule. Respect the charters and the franchises which your forefathers have granted; and keep the burgesses always in your favour and love; for if the great towns in your dominions are strong and rich, foreign princes and your peers and barons will be very loath to do you hurt. Protect the clergy and the

religious who pray for you and for your kingdom. Honour and love all men in Holy Church, and take care that they enjoy the gifts and privileges granted to their predecessors. My grandfather, King Philip, had for a maxim that it is sometimes better to be a little blind to certain faults in ecclesiastics than to repress them with great violence and scandal. Love and honour the queen, your mother, and pay good heed to her advice and wishes. Make no war, especially upon Christians, without great cause and grave deliberation. If you are forced to make war, see that Holy Church has not to suffer, and inflict as little damage as possible upon the innocent subjects of your adversary. Use all your authority to hinder private wars among your vassals. Be scrupulous in the appointment of provosts and bailiffs, and often make enquiries about them and about the members of your household to discover if the vices of avarice, falsehood and dishonesty be found among them. Hinder to the utmost of your power all blasphemies, sinful oaths, games of chance, drunkenness and impurity. Never make extravagant expenses. Have always a great respect for the Roman Church and for the Pope, whom you are to honour as your spiritual father. After my death, take care to have a great many Masses and prayers said for me in the churches and religious communities of France, and give me a share in all the good works which you shall do.

Lastly, my dearest son, I bless you with the most tender affection that any father can give his child. May the Saints and Angels guard and defend you from all evil! May Our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you in His service, and so increase His grace in your soul that you may never do aught against His holy will; and that He may ever receive from you the honour and loyal service which is His due! I beg this same grace for myself; so that, after this mortal life, both you and I may meet together in His holy presence and praise and adore Him for ever and ever.

APPENDIX C.

THE ROYAL FAMILY OF FRANCE, IN THE LIFETIME OF ST. LOUIS

Philip Augustus
1165-1223.

Louis VIII, the Lion, = Blanche of Castile.
1187-1226.

Philip Hurepel,
Count of Boulogne.

Philip
(died
before
his
father).

St Louis IX = Margaret
1215-1270.
of
Provence.

Robert
of Artois.

Alphonse
of Poitou.

Charles
of Anjou.

Ed Isabella.

Louis
(died
before
his
father).

Philip III
1245-1285

John
Tristan.

Peter
of Alençon.

Queen of Navarre
Castile.

Isabella,

Blanche.

Queen of
Castile.

Robert.

Margaret.

Agnes.

Louis
(founder of
Bourbon line).

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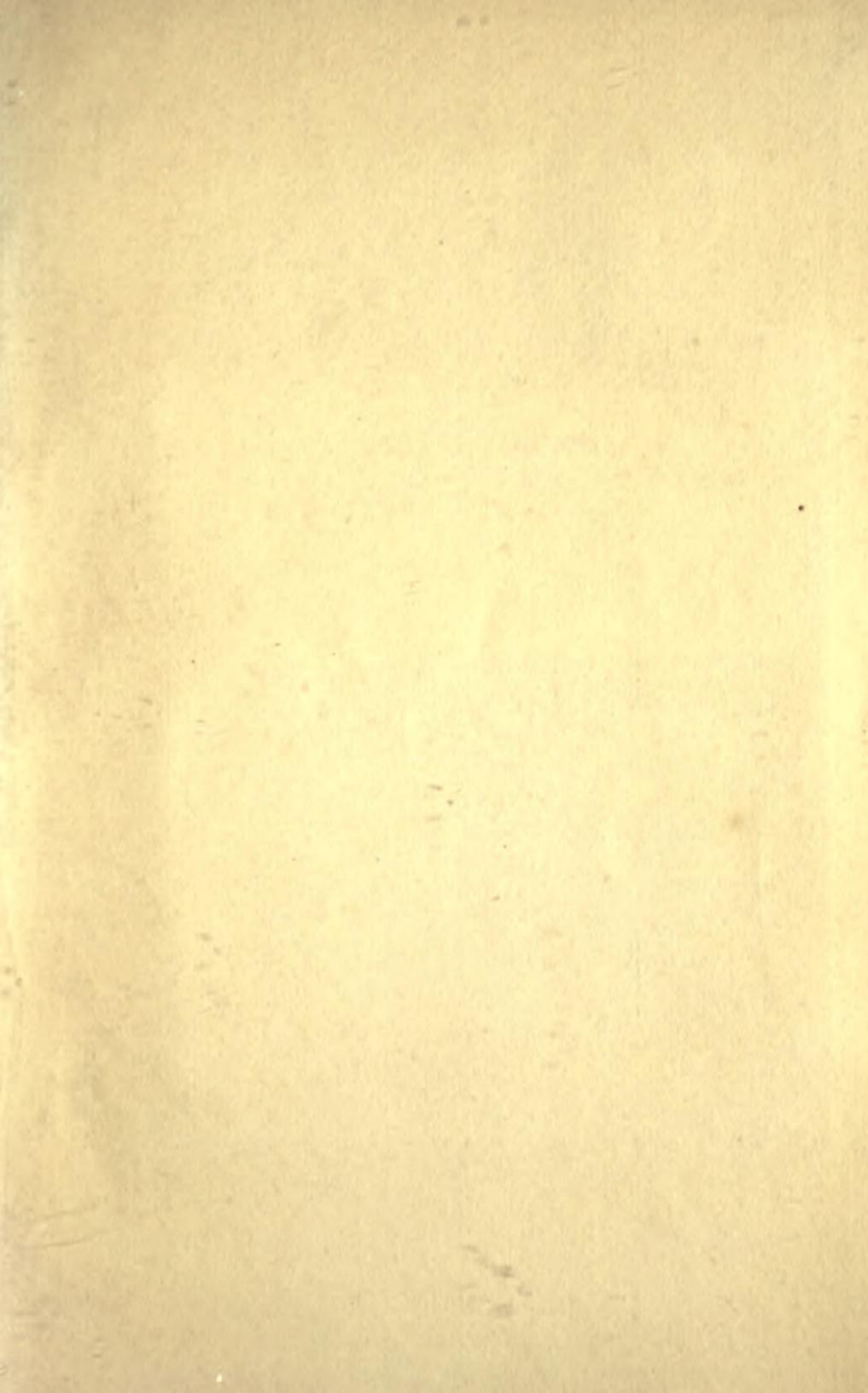
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